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Two more victims of Gaza suicide attack die

IDF doubtful of keeping July 1 deadline

ALON PINKAS and BILL HUTMAN

CHIEF of General Staff Lt. Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak and Planning Branch head Maj. Gen. Uzi Dayan both expressed doubt yesterday that Israel and the PLO could meet the July 1 target date for partial IDF redeployment in Judea and Samaria, and elections for the Palestinian Authority council.

Both Shahak and Dayan were attending a meeting on the next phase of negotiations between Israel and the PLO, convened by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin yesterday.

The two presented Rabin with a road separation plan for the Gaza Strip devised by the Southern Command, and recommended that the two roads closed to Palestinian traffic after Sunday's suicide attacks remain closed until the Palestinians accept the plan.

As of late Sunday night, Palestinians were barred from traveling along the two access roads leading to Netzarim and Kfar Darom, and the main north-to-south road linking Gaza City to Khan Yunis, which also links Netzarim and Kfar Darom.

Regarding the July 1 deadline, a senior army source said last night that "the IDF's view is that redeployment outside of cities and towns such as Kalkilya, Jenin and Tulkarm must be discussed only after PA Chairman Yasser Arafat unequivocally demonstrates that he controls the area under his jurisdiction, especially Gaza."

"It's true that Hamas's hotbed is Gaza, where they are supported by at least 30 percent of the population, but self-rule cannot be extended to cities in Judea and Samaria unless self-rule ceases to be a term and becomes reality in Gaza," the source said.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said last night on Channel One's *Popolitika* that the government had decided not to halt talks but to keep its obligations on the second stage of the Oslo Accord. He rejected freezing negotiations, claiming that terror would not be frozen.

Industry and Trade Minister Micha Harish said yesterday that "it's already clear that the timetable for the Oslo Accord is canceled."

But Police Minister Moshe Shahal said Israel has no choice but to forge ahead with the peace process, despite the continued terror attacks. "There is no alternative, even if the situation continues," Shahal told reporters in Jerusalem.

A first measure taken by the IDF to combat future attacks is a plan for separate roads.

The plan concerns the access roads leading to the main Gaza Strip north-to-south artery, a highway on which both Israeli and Palestinian vehicles are allowed to travel as stipulated in the Cairo Agreement, military sources said last night.

The plan recommends the construction of two alternative routes to be used by Palestinian cars, while the existing roads will be exclusively for IDF and Israeli civilian vehicles.

Shahal confirmed that security officials decided to separate Palestinian and Israeli traffic in the area of Sunday's attacks, which he said had reaffirmed the need for "the separation of the Palestinian and Israeli populations."

However, the IDF's Gaza area deputy division commander, Col. Yossi Geiz, told reporters yesterday that total separation on the roads is unattainable.

"Separation requires extensive infrastructure and road construction. That takes time and money and until then, 100 percent separation cannot be achieved," he said in a briefing.



Sgt. Zvi Narbat's comrades mourn at his funeral yesterday in Rishon LeZion's military cemetery.

(Alon Ron/Israel Sun)

PA court sentences bomb instructor

JON IMMANUEL

AN ISLAMIC Jihad activist became the first person to be convicted by a Palestinian security court, which gave him a 15-year sentence yesterday for burying teenagers alive to test their mettle as suicide bombers.

The 16-hour trial, which began after Sunday's suicide attacks near Kfar Darom and Netzarim, was seen by many Gazans as a concession to Israeli demands, much like Sunday night's arrest of 150 Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists.

Palestinian Authority Attorney General Attorney-General Khaled Qidre said yesterday that the leading spokesman of Islamic Jihad Abdullah Shami would go on trial Sunday and other trials would follow.

Many of those arrested in the police raids across the Gaza Strip were arrested before but released after a few days. Two youths in Khan Yunis were arrested after a gunfight.

The security courts were con-

demned both by Palestinian human rights activists and opposition groups as unconstitutional when Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat established them by decree in early February, in response to the Beit Lid bombing.

Police sources said they believe Arafat is serious this time about putting down a challenge he considers a threat to his rule, because Sunday's bombings took place in Gaza. Moreover, Hamas was shown to be making bombs there in the Sheikh Radwan explosion a week ago. Some weapons have been confiscated, they noted.

Samir Ali Jedi, arrested on March 5, was convicted by three senior police officers on the evidence of six witnesses, age 14 to 19, who said he had them buried alive for several minutes to test their courage. When they passed the test, Jedi said they were ready to undertake suicide missions.

Some of them reported the initiation rite to their parents, who passed on the information to police.

"He buried them in graves and closed the graves with boards for 10 minutes to see if they were strong enough to face death. When he opened the graves he declared them ready for these activities," Qidre told *The Jerusalem Post*.

Jedi, 34, known as Abu Ali in the Shajaiyeh neighborhood of Gaza City, taught youngsters Islam. A cousin of Jedi said he supported Islamic Jihad but was not a member. "Police stripped the youths, beat them and forced them to confess or be called collaborators," he claimed. There is no appeal against convictions in the security courts which hear evidence in secret.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres urged Arafat to arrest more Hamas religious leaders.

"It is clear that these youths who committed suicide were incited by religious men," he said yesterday, according to AP. "They have to be found because in the end those who commit suicide are also victims - victims of stupidity and temptation..."

"Those who tempt them to murder... have to be brought to justice and tried. The weapons have to be confiscated."

Senior Hamas activist Imad Falouji called Jedi's trial "a political trial."

Qidre said trials will continue this Thursday and early next week.

A serious test of the PA's resolve will be the trial of Shami, the most prominent spokesman of Islamic Jihad who has been in jail since January 24. He is to be tried next week, Qidre said. The exact charges have not yet been drafted but will focus on Shami's influence over Anwar Sukar, his neighbor in Shajaiyeh who was (Continued on Page 2)

Friends remember Alisa Flatow as kind, gentle

MARILYN HENRY NEW YORK

IN Alisa Flatow's high-school file is a letter the faculty had written in support of her applications to college.

"Alisa is alive," the letter said. "There is a sparkle in her eye."

In her hometown of West Orange, New Jersey, and at Brandeis University, stunned friends and teachers remembered Flatow yesterday as a kind, gentle young woman.

Flatow died yesterday from injuries she sustained during Sunday's terror incident against bus No. 36 near Kfar Darom. She and Chavi Levine, from Englewood, New Jersey, had been traveling to a resort in Gaza for the Pessah holiday.

Her funeral is scheduled for tomorrow in New Jersey. Chavi Levine, who was injured, was en route back home to the U.S.

Flatow, 20, was the oldest of five children of Steven and Rosalyn Flatow.

Rosalyn Flatow works for the Jewish Education Association of the Metrowest, New Jersey, federation.

A junior majoring in sociology at Brandeis in Waltham, Massachusetts, Flatow had been on leave since January in order to study at Upana Yeshiva Mishmat in Jerusalem.

At Temple Shalom, the Reform synagogue down the road from Brandeis where Flatow was a teaching assistant in the religious school last year, Ina Ra-



Alisa Flatow (AP)

binowicz, who taught the sixth-graders, said, "She was from a traditional background, and she brought something special into this class that enriched the students. They listened to her."

While at the Frisch School, an Orthodox high school in Paramus, New Jersey, Flatow worked as a volunteer, teaching Soviet immigrant children to read and write Hebrew. She also taught them baseball.

"She had a tremendously positive attitude and a quiet sense of humor," said Rabbi Saul Zucker, the associate principal at the Frisch School.

Prison heads to be punished for easing up on Yair Levy

Jerusalem Post Staff

THE Prisons Service committee investigating former Shas MK Yair Levy's violations of his rehabilitation program decided yesterday to take measures against a number of officers responsible for the terms of Levy's imprisonment, including the director of the prison where he is being held.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal approved the recommendations.

The director of Ma'asiyahu Prison, where Levy is serving a four-year sentence, will face a disciplinary hearing, and the director of the Prisons Service central region will receive an administrative notation in his personal file, as will the deputy director of Ma'asiyahu. A notation of non-professional conduct will be made against the head of the education and rehabilitation department and the national

rehabilitation officer.

The committee was asked to investigate how Levy failed to meet the terms of his rehabilitation program, in which he would work during the day at a Bnei Brak yeshiva, Or Haim, and return to jail at night. After news photographers spotted Levy regularly taking strolls in the city, and going home and to his synagogue, Shahal ordered a seven-member committee to examine the terms of Levy's rehabilitation.

The committee did not find any wrongdoing in sending Levy to the yeshiva, near his home, as the aim of the rehabilitation program is to reintegrate prisoners into their communities.

Rabin to press US Congress to help modernize, reduce Jordanian military

DAVID MAKOVSKY

PRIME Minister Yitzhak Rabin has sent word to Washington that he wants Congress to support plans to modernize and downsize the Jordanian military, sources say.

Rabin has already been a driving force in pressing Congress to accelerate its original three-year plan for eliminating Jordan's debt.

Now, with growing congressional support for writing off all of Jordan's \$275 million debt, Rabin believes Congress should embark on the second phase: helping the Jordanian military.

He believes Hussein's aging military should also benefit from peace. This would include a consolidation of Jordan's four divisions.

Last summer, King Hussein sent a letter to President Clinton which included a plea to help

modernize Jordan's army. In response, US officials promised that some assistance for this purpose would be forthcoming.

Washington sources say the US has sent Jordan a relatively modest amount of supplies, including trucks, communications equipment, and ammunition.

But so far, the US has not come through with more important military systems for Jordan such as tanks, upgraded avionics, air-defense equipment, and electronic radar, Washington analysts say.

Jordan is also believed to be seeking older F-16A aircraft, but it remains unclear if Israel would support this.

According to a report in yesterday's *Washington Post*, Secretary of State Warren Christopher told

King Hussein that he will neither receive F-16 aircraft nor Hawk anti-aircraft missiles because of congressional budgetary restraints.

In Hussein's letter to Clinton, it is believed that he asked for an assurance that \$2.1 billion in annual aid - the same amount Egypt receives - be given to Jordan over the next 10 years.

However, it appears that the amount of military assistance set aside by Congress for this coming fiscal year will certainly be less than that requested by King Hussein.

One idea is to provide the Jordanian military with "draw-downs" of US military stocks, but beyond a modest amount, this too would require congressional approval.

Muashar, Shamir present credentials, Page 12

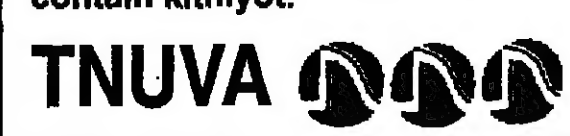
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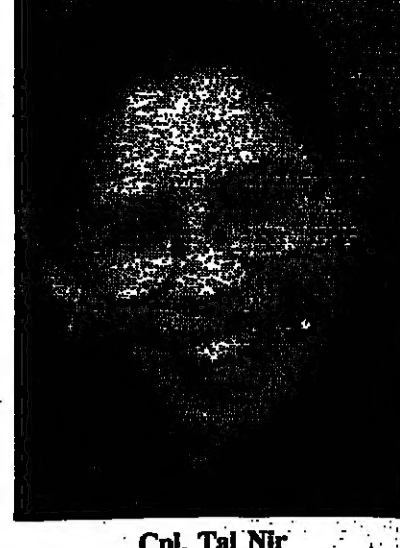
Sgt. Itai Diener



Sgt. Zvi Narbat



Sgt. Netta Sofrin



Cpl. Tal Nir

Funerals held for six suicide bombing victims

SIX of the soldiers killed in Sunday's attack were buried yesterday.

Sgt. Yuval Regev was laid to rest in the Holon military cemetery. Hundreds of people participated in the ceremony, among them his family, his unit commander and his army comrades.

Regev was praised by his commander and friends, as well as by the mayor and chief rabbi of Holon. His unit's representative said he was one of the best fighters of his unit, always helpful and caring to his companions. He added

that they would continue fighting terrorism, and that his death had changed everybody's life.

The funerals of Netta Sofrin, 20, Zvi Narbat, 19, and Itai Diener, 19, took place in Rishon LeZion's military cemetery.

"Netta was blessed with spiritual quietness, initiative, leadership, responsibility and volunteering," Sofrin's commander said, stressing his determination to find and punish her murderers. Rishon LeZion Mayor Meir Nitza remembered how Sofrin volunteered to help in a Negev de-

velopment town because of her love of people.

Diener's funeral was attended by his family, friends, fellow Givati soldiers and city residents. "Itai was one of the best soldiers in the regiment," his commander said. "He was very motivated, quiet and loved by his friends."

He added that Diener was a man of principles and values, who loved life and his family.

Diener's grandfather praised him and said that not even in his worst dreams had he ever thought he would have to bury his

DAVID RUDGE and Tim

eldest grandson. "God took yet another flower from the Jewish people," he said.

Narbat was buried next to Diener, whose funeral took place a few minutes earlier. Narbat's commander said that "words cannot express the good that was in Tzvi. He was a person of values, always smiling and a great fighter."

Tal Nir's funeral took place in

her home at Kibbutz Miflasim near Sderot, attended by hundreds of family members, Kibbutz members and friends. The woman soldier's funeral was quiet, and a crying friend said: "She was quiet and relaxed, and she's thus being buried quietly."

The family requested from the army that Tal have a civilian funeral, and therefore no speeches were given by military personnel.

The military section of the Sederot cemetery was packed with mourners as Staff-Sgt. Meir Scheinwald was laid to rest.

Scheinwald, 20, who was born and raised in Safed, was eulogized by Rabbi Tzafania Drori, head of the hesder yeshiva in Kiryat Shmona where the young Givati Brigade soldier had studied.

Hundreds of people, led by Scheinwald's parents Moshe and Nehama - both well-known educators in the Safed area - including relatives, friends and members of Scheinwald's army unit attended the ceremony.

Drori said Scheinwald had been a guiding light to all who knew him, and would be sorely

missed. "We know the wonderful family he came from - his parents who go from their home on the peak of the hill to the hospital to give someone medicine and then return by foot. We know the background from which his good-heartedness sprang," said Drori.

Relatives said Scheinwald had tried to succeed in everything he did and had very much wanted to become an officer. He had apparently woken early on the morning of the attack to get to his base on time to replace a friend who was supposed to go home on leave.

SOCIAL & PERSONAL

Mrs. Beverly M. Taylor, chairman of the South London Liberal Synagogue and personal assistant to the senior vice president of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues (ULPS) London, returned to London this morning after a brief visit to attend the garden party celebrating the marriage of her niece, Michal Yudelman, to Thomas O'Dwyer, of Tipersary.

Singer: Halting talks would give 'prize' to attackers

CAIRO (AP) - Israel is going ahead with negotiations with the PLO because suspending talks would give a "prize" to suicide car bombers who killed eight people in the Gaza Strip, the chief delegate said.

Yoel Singer made the statement as he arrived at a Cairo hotel for negotiations on proposed elections for a council to govern Palestinian autonomous zones in the Gaza Strip and Judea/Samaria.

Later, Singer met privately for 90 minutes with Saeb Erekat, head of the Palestinian delegation. Both men declined to speak to reporters after the meeting. Their teams then joined the talks.

Singer said the decision to keep the talks going was made at a meeting yesterday morning with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

"Our decision... is to continue with the negotiations because by suspending the negotiations, we

can only give the prize to the terrorists," he told reporters.

Singer also repeated a call for the PLO to halt the attacks against Israelis by radical Moslem groups opposed to the peace talks.

"The Palestinians must make the decision whether they want to live in a society infested with terrorism or whether they want to live in a peaceful society," he said.

"We hope they will make the right decision and fight against such acts of terrorism in a better way than they have been doing so far," said Singer.

"It is a Palestinian decision - how do they want to build their nation, in what kind of society do they want to live," he said.

'Rabin hoping for continued American funding of PLO'

DAVID MAKOVSKY

convictions of Palestinians who commit acts against Israel. (The PA announced the first conviction of a Palestinian yesterday); and the disarming of Islamic militants.

One option would be to craft legislation that would focus on these three criteria as being pivotal for the PLO to meet by a set date.

Of less immediate priority for Rabin is the PLO's immediate amending of its 1964 charter which calls for the destruction of Israel, sources say.

In a September 9, 1993, letter to Rabin, Arafat said those aspects of the charter calling for Israel's destruction are "no longer valid," but he has yet to convene the PLO quasi-parliamentary Palestinian National Council, which is empowered by a two-thirds majority to amend the charter. Arafat has said even before the Oslo accord was signed that he did not have the needed two-thirds majority supporting modification of the charter.

One idea that Rabin is considering would be to insist that Arafat run in the Palestinian elections on a campaign platform calling for the change of the charter.

In contrast to Rabin, Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin believes the US should stay out of the issue of compliance altogether. This has angered members of Congress, who note that what is involved is how US money is being spent. Beilin, who just returned from the US last week, believes Israel needs to step up its efforts to educate US congressmen on the intricacies of the peace process.

"Either the Rabin or Beilin approach means that before June 30 comes around, Israel is likely to be lobbying for aid to the PLO," a Washington source said, adding, "This is going to be much harder than obtaining debt relief to Jordan. Nobody has anything against King Hussein, but they do have things against Arafat. There are members of Congress who believe that the PLO should not get anything."

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Clinton: Terror mustn't derail peace process

LOS ANGELES (AP) - New incidents of terrorist violence in the Gaza Strip must not be allowed to derail the peace process in the Middle East, President Clinton insisted Sunday. "Let us stiffen our resolve," he told a Jewish organization.

"We have to find a way to push for peace in the Middle East and not let the forces of disintegration destroy it," Clinton said.

Speaking to members of the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles, Clinton said: "I offer my condolences of the American people to the people of Israel and the government of Israel, as well as to the American citizens and their families who were affected by this attack."

"Once more, the enemies of peace have sought to abuse the opportunity peace presents - to kill it, to kill hope, to kill all possibility of a normal life for the people of Israel [and] for the Palestinians struggling to do the right thing there," Clinton said.

"Why do people blow up buses in Israel? They are people who believe they can only be successful in life if people are dying," Clinton said.

The president said people everywhere must resist the temptation to define success "by someone else's failure."

COURT

(Continued from Page 1)

one of the Beit Lid bombers, Qidre said.

To dampen criticism about the security courts, PA Justice Minister Freih Abu Meidina recently said the first trials would be of collaborators. A week ago, he mentioned imminent trials for specific collaborators connected with the killing of Islamic Jihad activist Hani Abed in November and six Fatah activists by IDF troops a year ago. Yesterday, in response to the Kfar Darom-Netzarim attacks, he said "Israel is responsible for guarding its settlements and soldiers."

Qidre denied that collaborator trials had been abruptly postponed in the wake of Sunday's attacks. Jedi's trial date was fixed more than week ago, he said. "I am the one who decides," he said. "We look at all cases attacking our security in the same way."

So far only the trials of Islamic radicals had been scheduled, he said.

VICTIMS

(Continued from Page 1)

pital in Jerusalem's Ein Kerem, Shlomo Ben-Haim was in serious condition but improving after undergoing three separate operations; Liora Shuker of Rosh Ha'ayin, who suffered serious chest and head wounds, underwent an operation in the neurosurgery department; and Nevat Kahana of Kfar Sava was in moderate condition and fully conscious after undergoing surgery to repair a fractured skull.

Nine patients were still at Sheba Hospital, but only one was in serious condition. The condition of two others who had suffered serious wounds improved to moderate, along with three who remained in moderate condition, while three were in good condition.

David Rudge and Amir Rozenblit contributed to this report.

DRIVE CAREFULLY!!

Brodet: PA deficit due to excessive spending

JOSE ROSENFELD

PROFLIGATE spending has led the Palestinian Authority to run up a deficit of nearly a third of its annual budget, Treasury Director-General David Brodet said yesterday. At an informal donor-country meeting in Washington last week, the PA's budget deficit was estimated at \$135 million out of an annual \$440m. budget. Brodet, who participated in the meeting, said that part of the deficit derived from a lack of spending discipline.

According to Brodet, spending exceeded budget targets as the PA hired more police than allowed, as well as increased the size of the civil administration. In addition, the authority raised public sector salaries.

The PA responded that it had to hire more people as an anti-jobless measure due to the closure. A working group led by Norway, including the US, the European Union and Japan, will fix deficit figures and propose how to finance the deficit by April 28, when the formal donor meeting is scheduled to take place.

Brodet said he is more optimistic now that donor countries will shift money earmarked for projects to funding for the Palestinian Authority's current expenditures.

The donor countries also agreed to establish a prototype industrial zone in Gaza, said Brodet. They commissioned the World Bank to do a feasibility study and Israel agreed to fund the infrastructure for the project. According to Brodet, it will take about a year and a half to get the prototype industrial zone up and running. Brodet said both the Palestinians and the donor countries rejected a proposal to build the zones on the Israeli side.

'Vacationers should maintain vigil'

ISRAELIS vacationing during the Pessah week in both Israel and abroad should increase their alertness in the face of possible attacks, the Prime Minister's adviser on terrorism Brig.-Gen. Yigal Pressler said in a special travel and holiday advisory issued yesterday.

Pressler calls on Israelis to "pay attention to suspicious objects, cars and individuals as well as to unusual behavior."

In his advisory, Pressler recommends that Israelis traveling abroad should consult the "Preventive safety behavior manual" distributed by travel agents in Israel's air and sea ports. In case of trouble, travelers are advised to consult the Israeli embassy or consulate in the country they are visiting.

In the advisory, which does not include countries considered security risks, Pressler emphasizes that there is no current information justifying cancellation of visits or any other holiday plans. Alon Pinkas

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Troops block aid to Chechen town; massacre alleged

مكزامن الأصيل

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Fujimori crushes Perez de Cuellar in Peruvian elections

LIMA (AP) - President Alberto Fujimori, credited with virtually defeating South America's bloodiest rebel movement, won a second term in Peru's first national elections free of guerrilla violence in more than a decade.

According to unofficial results, Fujimori won a landslide victory Sunday with at least 60 percent of the vote, beating out 13 other candidates.

The elections board said yesterday that with 16 percent of the votes counted, Fujimori had 65 percent. His nearest challenger, Javier Perez de Cuellar, was second with 22 percent.

Fujimori, 56, said he planned to strengthen what he had already accomplished, including free-market reforms and the guerrilla crackdown.

"That means defeating inflation once and for all, completely defeating the violence and continuing the economic growth," he said.

Perez de Cuellar, the former UN secretary-general, had based his campaign on creating jobs and eliminating poverty.

Exit polls by Peru's three leading polling companies gave the president 60 percent to 64 percent of the vote, while Perez de Cuellar had 20 percent to 23 percent. None of the other candidates had more than 4 percent.

Since his election in 1990 as a dark-horse candidate, Fujimori has put the brakes on inflation that once topped 7,500 percent but was 15 percent last year. He

also nearly wiped out the Shining Path, the ruthless Maoist rebel movement that had terrified the country since 1980 and whose bombings and threats had marred past elections. No rebel-related violence was reported Sunday.

Many of Fujimori's achievements came after 1992, when he closed Congress and the courts - claiming they were obstructing - and began ruling with dictatorial powers. A new Congress later wrote a constitution that allowed him to run for a second successive term, an unusual provision in Latin America.

Fujimori apparently was unhurt by a messy breakup last year with his wife, Susana Higuchi, who tried unsuccessfully to launch her own presidential bid, and by the recent border conflict with Ecuador, in which Peru took the heavier losses.

Voters clearly gave short shrift to allegations of fraud late last week when police raided a house in the interior of the country and found people marking ballots for Fujimori and other candidates.

"I believe it's a lie. It's a political trick so that the people wouldn't vote for him," Fujimori supporter Maria Marquez said as she waited in line in a working-class Lima neighborhood to vote. Officials said the ballot-markers weren't connected to any party and apparently wanted to sell the ballots.

The president may also have won a clear majority in the 120-member unicameral Congress.

UK sleaze storm gathers steam

LONDON (Reuters) - Prime Minister John Major yesterday expressed support for a senior cabinet colleague under fire for his Arab business dealings in the latest round of sleaze allegations to hit the beleaguered British government.

Government officials said Major had "full confidence" in Jonathan Aitken, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who is the target of a potentially damaging TV documentary that was scheduled to be screened last night.

The program alleges Aitken unsuccessfully tried to arrange gifts for a sheikh visiting Britain, accepted gifts and failed to declare his membership of the board of a Lebanese-owned arms company.

Aitken, who got into political hot water last year over his friendships with other leading Arab businessmen, denies the allegations and called the program a "character assassination plot."

He said he was proud of his business links with the Saudis, saying they were good for British exports and investments.

The furor came a day after another Conservative MP, Richard Spring, resigned as a ministerial aide following newspaper tales of a "three-in-a-bed sex romp."

Spring was the 17th Conserva-

tive politician to have departed under a cloud since Major took office three years ago.

The renewed attack on Aitken was potentially far more serious and the documentary was expected to be screened despite his vigorous protests.

Bad behavior, vicious infighting over Europe and repeated assaults on Major's leadership qualities have sent the government plunging 35 points behind the Labor Party in opinion polls.

Lord Jeffrey Archer, a former deputy chairman of the Conservative Party, warned yesterday of defeat at the next election, which must be held by April 1997.

"I believe that if we go on quarrelling with ourselves in public and we appear on radio and television fighting each other and not the Labor Party, we will lose (the next election) and we will lose badly and we will deserve to lose," Archer told BBC radio.

"We must show some unity and get behind the prime minister." The Conservatives were thrashed at local council elections in Scotland last week and the government is bracing itself for what threatens to be further dismal results for party candidates in next month's English and Welsh council elections.

Iraq urges Turkey to halt talks with Kurdish rebels

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - Iraq said yesterday Ankara would jeopardize its relations with Baghdad if it continued talks with Iraqi Kurdish rebel leaders on the situation in northern Iraq.

Iraqi parliament denounced the Turkish incursion into northern Iraq as an invasion and demanded that Ankara pull out its troops immediately.

Turkey has sent 32,000 troops into northern Iraq in a drive against separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) rebels.

Ankara is negotiating with Massoud Barzani, leader of Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of Iraq, on means to prevent PKK from using the area to attack targets inside Turkey.

"The National Assembly requests that the Turkish government withdraw its military troops from northern Iraq immediately and stop dealing with the treasonous and outlaw Kurdish gangs," the parliament said in a statement.

The statement, carried by the

official Iraqi News Agency, said the presence of Turkish troops on Iraqi territory was "a flagrant violation of good-neighborly relations."

Iraq's ruling Baath party newspaper al-Thawra said Turkey risked losing its trading ties with Iraq and its own security if it did not put an end to contacts with rebel leaders.

"Turkey has relied in this abnormal step on a fragile wall comprising a heterogeneous terrorist group torn by extortion, differences and personal interests," it said in a commentary.

Iraq views the Turkish incursion as a step undermining its authority over the region which is controlled by Iraqi Kurdish rebels.

The KDP and its rival the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) have declared a temporary ceasefire after four months of fighting which killed hundreds of people and virtually destroyed the local Kurdish administration they ran together.

Man kills himself after flubbing lottery

LONDON (Reuters) - A man killed himself after missing out on an £8 million (NIS 39 million) lottery jackpot by forgetting to pay his weekly stake, police said yesterday.

Tim O'Brien, a father of two, had picked the same numbers every week since the British National Lottery began last year.

Realizing he had forgotten to

renew his weekly stake, O'Brien went up to the attic of his house in Liverpool and shot himself.

"We are not looking for anyone else in connection with the man's death," a police spokesman said.

"We are all devastated. It is absolutely tragic someone should take their life over the lottery," a spokeswoman for lottery organizers said.

מקראים הנחמדים

UN slams Serbs over Sarajevo shelling

SARAJEVO (Reuters) - NATO jets roared over Sarajevo and the UN commander protested to the Bosnian Serbs yesterday after mortar fire killed and injured civilians.

"It does seem that the Bosnian Serbs are not looking for military targets and are in a cowardly fashion trying to harass the people of this city," said UN spokesman Alexander Ivanko. "I have to admit that yesterday the UN failed to deter an attack on the city."

Doctors at the city's Kosevo hospital said three people were killed, including a 15-year-old girl, and at least seven were injured, when 12 mortar rounds hit Sarajevo on Sunday.

In a statement, the United Nations commander in Bosnia, Lieutenant General Rupert Smith, said he had issued a formal protest to the Bosnian Serb leadership and ordered NATO jets to fly over the city marking targets for possible retaliatory air strikes.

UN commanders have become increasingly reluctant to use their powers to order the bombing of Bosnian Serb forces attacking Moslem civilian areas, fearful of peacekeepers being taken hostage and suffering reprisals.

Bosnian Serb attacks on UN-declared "safe areas" like Sarajevo have increased dramatically in the last weeks in the wake of a two-pronged Bosnian government army offensive that blew apart a four-month truce and won strategic ground.

British Prime Minister John Major called on the government and the Bosnian Serbs to respect the crumbling ceasefire, due to expire in three weeks and which major power peace negotiators want both sides to extend.

Officials from the Contact Group - Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the US - are due in Balkan capitals to push for a truce extension and offer Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic a suspension of sanctions on Belgrade in return for recognizing

Bosnia and Croatia. The Contact Group believes Milosevic's recognition of his neighbors independence will further isolate the Bosnian Serbs and pressure them to accept a peace plan dividing Bosnia roughly in half that they have steadfastly refused.

The Bosnian government says it must keep up military pressure on the Serbs to force them to trade some of the 70 percent of the country they hold as part of a peace deal.

Bob Dole begins third White House bid

TOPEKA, Kansas (AP) - Offering himself as "tempered by adversity, seasoned by experience," Sen. Bob Dole launched his third presidential campaign yesterday vowing to cut taxes, balance the budget and "lead America back to her place in the sun."

Dole, the Senate majority leader and early Republican front-runner, pledged to shift authority over schools, welfare and other issues back to the states.

"My mandate as president would be to rein in the federal government in order to set free the spirit of the American people; to reconnect our government in Washington with the common sense values of our

citizens; and to reassert America's interest wherever and whenever they are challenged around the world," Dole said, speaking at a rally moved indoors because of cold and rain.

Only three times in history have sitting senators won the White House. And Dole, now 71, will be 73 by the time the 1996 election rolls around, an age at which only Ronald Reagan has been elected president, in his case to a second term. But Dole, one of the most enduring, familiar and adaptable figures in recent American political history, opened his campaign with an optimistic spirit.

"My friends, I have the experience,"

Dole said. "I've been tested, tested in many ways. I am not afraid to lead and I know the way."

Dole is seeking to dispel any doubts that the new House Republican policy - and perhaps his candidacy - would be derailed in the Senate. He eagerly embraced the agenda that helped Republicans to their stunning success in last year's elections: a balanced budget amendment, a line-item veto and welfare reform, all under the umbrella of dramatically shrinking Washington's power and restoring more authority to states and communities.

Dole never mentioned his Republican rivals, but heaped scorn on the man he

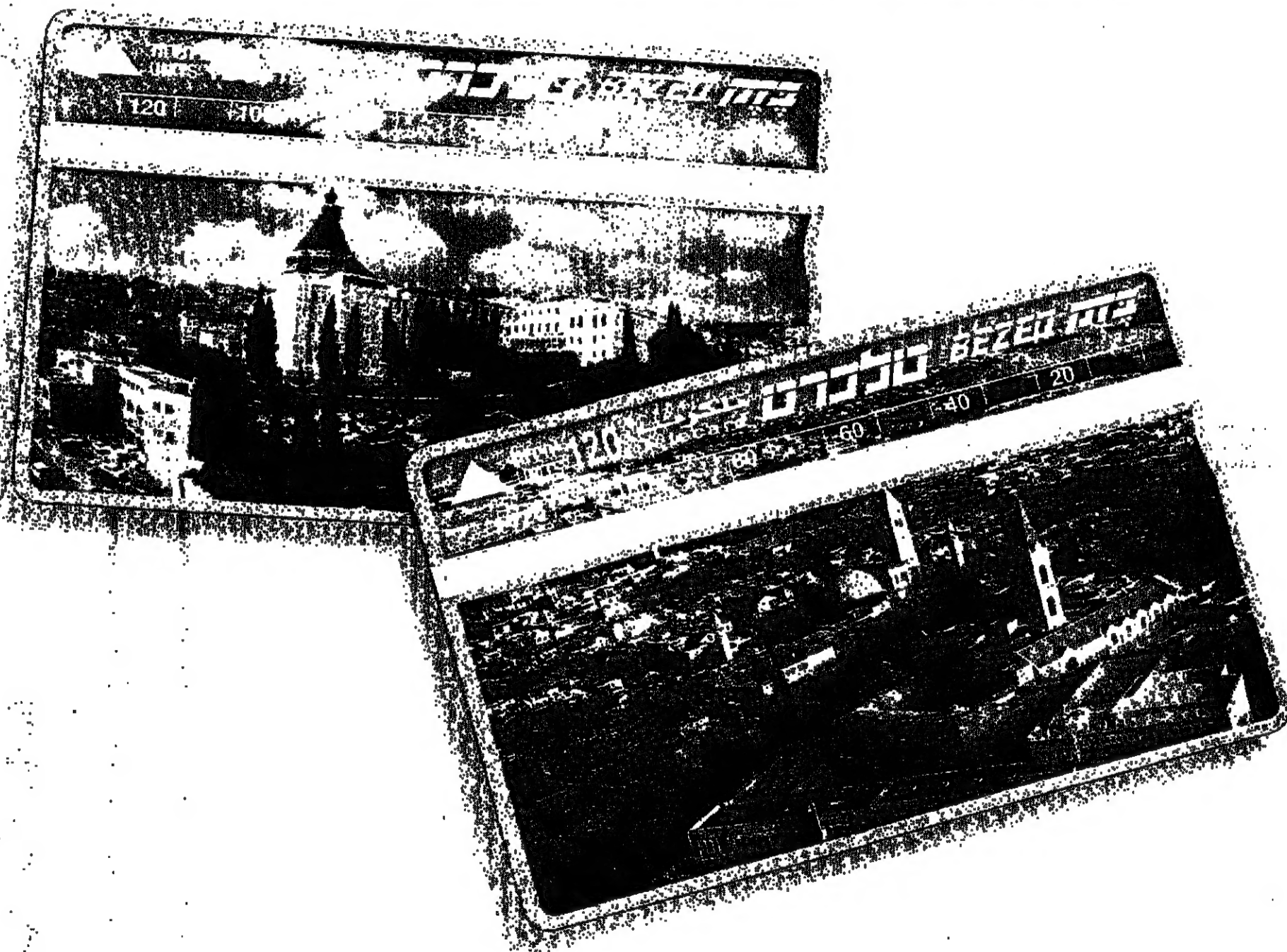
hopes to evict from the White House - Democratic President Bill Clinton.

After being elected on a promise of bold change in 1992, Dole said Clinton now was fighting at every turn to block the bolder change voters demanded last year when they gave Republicans control of Congress for the first time in four decades.

And, on the global stage, Dole said Clinton has been far too willing to put US interests second to those of the United Nations.

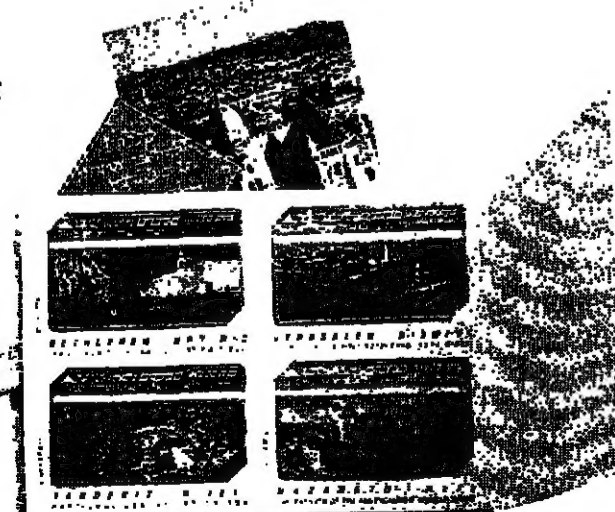
"When we take our revolution to the White House in 1996, we will vow that American policies will be determined by us, not by the United Nations," he said.

PILGRIMAGE SITES IN THE HOLY LAND



A New Series of Telecards

Bezeq presents a new series of telecards - Christian pilgrim sites - prepared in cooperation with the Israel Government Tourist Corporation. There are four cards in the series, bearing pictures of Christian pilgrim sites - some of the Holy Land's most beautiful. A delightful gift for collectors,



Israelis and tourists, who appreciate the country's beautiful sights. The pilgrim series is of four cards, each containing 120 call units. The cards cost NIS 49.50 each (incl. VAT). Special gift packaging costs NIS 200 (incl. VAT) - ask for the four telecards in the colour presentation set.

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Arafat's moment of truth

A few weeks before the breakthrough in the Oslo talks in 1993, Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin prepared the Foreign Ministry staff for the change in Israel's policy on the PLO. There is no alternative to negotiating with Yasser Arafat, he said. He is the only Palestinian who is an international "household name," the only leader accepted by a majority of the Palestinian people, and the only one who could sell them the idea of peace with Israel.

There was some logic to this contention, even though it was clear at the time that the PLO was at the nadir of its popularity, and that in the territories Arafat was becoming an object of derision and resentment rather than adulation. Yet the simple fact was that no other Palestinian leader could claim to represent the Palestinian people. The government, claiming that the Palestinian delegation to the Washington talks could not make tough decisions, concluded that only Arafat could make peace.

Even then it was clear that large segments of the Palestinian population did not accept Arafat's authority. But it was assumed that the "rejectionists," whether the Islamic groups or the PLO radicals, would either fall into line or be subdued by Arafat's forces. "Why should we chase the Hamas terrorists," asked Foreign Minister Shimon Peres at the time. "Let the PLO do it."

To ensure Arafat's ability to impose his will, Israel promised him a large, well-equipped army, euphemistically described as a police force. And within less than a year this army, intended to be limited to 9,000 troops, became a serious force, now numbering anywhere between 17,000 and 25,000 amply equipped soldiers.

In addition, Arafat has built several secret police apparatuses, presumably to control subversive activity which may undermine the "peace process." Recently he also revived the "Fatah Hawks," whose specialty—as a government minister gleefully told the *Jerusalem Post* recently—is to fight the Hamas.

Yet the plain fact is that most of the energies of these armed forces are directed against "collaborators"—Palestinians who have thrown their lot in with Israel. These Israeli allies, including many who still live in areas officially under Israeli control, have been tortured, incarcerated and executed by Arafat's forces.

The "rejectionists," on the other hand, have been mostly left alone. True, their leaders do get arrested after every major terrorist strike, but the vast majority are released within a few days. Only those who threaten Arafat's rule stay in jail. In the 11 months of Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho, none of the Islamic militias has been disbanded, and none of the terrorists,

including those known to have murdered Israelis, has been arrested. The PA claims that it has prevented terrorist strikes against Israel, but in the absence of arrests, trials and punishments, such claims are less than convincing.

Now both Israel and the United States have concluded that there can be no "progress" in the process (by which they mean Israeli withdrawal from Arab population centers, Palestinian elections, and the release of terrorist prisoners) unless Arafat takes real steps against the terrorists. He is not expected to eradicate terrorism, but to arrest terrorist leaders, disarm their militias and outlaw them.

To disabuse him of the notion that terrorism will prompt Israel to withdraw faster, he is being told that he is miscalculating the Israeli mood. True, Israel did yield to terrorist pressure when it withdrew from Lebanon, and it did agree to recognize the PLO and withdraw from the territories as a result of intifada terrorism. But now only a minority in the government, and an even smaller minority in the nation, advocate withdrawal under terrorist fire. The one person who counts, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, has in effect declared a moratorium on further "progress" until Arafat undertakes to fight terrorism.

The moment of truth has arrived, the moment in which the wisdom of negotiating with Arafat is being put to the test. Arafat's forces are certainly superior to those of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. He is militarily capable of declaring war on them and winning. But if past conduct is any indication, he will do only a little more than he has done in the past in an effort to placate Israel and the US.

This is not because Arafat has never fought other Palestinians—he has done so with fierce determination in Lebanon—but because he has assiduously nurtured the Palestinian faith in the armed struggle. He knows what everyone who watches television knows: that the Palestinians' greatest heroes today are the "martyrs" who sacrifice themselves by killing Jews. Palestinians may sympathize with Arafat's need to pay lip service to regret, shock and even the condemnation of terrorists. They will not countenance his fighting them.

Not only Beilin, but Peres and the whole group of Oslo negotiators hoped that Arafat would be transformed by the opportunity presented by peace. Some in the peace camp freely compared him to Ben-Gurion. Peres himself wrote in his current book, "I do believe the Palestinians could potentially become the first truly democratic society." The advent of such a society among the Palestinians is indeed the first requisite of peace. But as long as Arafat is the Palestinian leader, there will be neither democracy for Palestinians nor peace for Israel.



ISRAEL'S SISYPHUS

Tradition vs. Thailand

THE IDF has announced, very late in the day, that there has been a perceptible downsizing in enlistment for combat units. Yitzhak Rabin told the Knesset that the percentage of volunteers has dropped from 32 to 30 percent.

The wonder isn't that this is happening, but that one third of young people are still choosing to train as pilots and paratroopers, or opting for the elite reconnaissance unit.

The fall had to come. It is an inevitable result of the systematic erosion of every value we possess. At school and at home, the average youngster learns that his top priority is self-fulfillment. Someone who wants to play music will enlist in the General Staff's Shekem and leave the sweat, the mud and doing night guard duty to others. The peak of success in Israel today is spinning the wheel of fortune and winning prizes.

The rot set in when pleasure began to take precedence over social obligation. Then historical truths got wiped out. The story went round that no marshes were dried up in the Jezreel valley. The new Bolsheviks even forbade the Book of Joshua to be taught in Labor Movement high schools. David Ben-Gurion and Yigal Alon are turning in their graves, and Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres stand silent at the helm of government.

The truth? Yosef Trumpeldor cursed his fate as he was dying, saying (as the doctor who was called in from Metulla testified), that if one had to die, then it ought to be in the Land of Israel. Yosef Hayim Brenner polished up this simple utterance, rendering it as "It is good to die for our country."

The fashionable line is that Trumpeldor simply let out a curse in Russian. In any case, everyone's fed up with the model of Tel Hai.

The day before his execution, Dov Gruner wrote to IZL com-

DAN MARGALIT

mander Menachem Begin that he wouldn't have taken a different course, even if he had known his fate in advance. This heroic attitude has also been dissected in legalistic argument. After all, it's more interesting to say that Hanna Szenes's mission to Hungary was a scandal. Soon enough,

The 'best and brightest' volunteer for combat units. Or do they?

she'll be condemned. Just as long as not a shred of the myth remains.

When there is no tradition, there are fewer volunteers. Last week, Newt Gingrich, leader of the Republican majority in the US Senate, bemoaned the state of American society, calling for more effort and fewer excuses.

Israel has lost sight of this message.

Other layers, desirable in themselves, are part of this trend: the feeling that peace is on the horizon, and that in the future swords will be beaten into ploughshares; and the general openness—which is most useful—to Western lifestyles.

But if the ultimate objectives are the beaches of California and the mysteries of Thailand, who will be prepared to give his all in the Lebanese mud?

THE DAMAGE to volunteerism is actually worse than Rabin's figures suggest, because the drop has been especially great in those sectors of society that have borne the brunt of the country's security for decades. Even among the volunteers some give up quickly and drop out.

If the number of volunteers still exceeds demand, it is because, fortunately, Sephardic

communities are gradually taking up their rightful place in society, and because the knitted kippas-wearers are streaming to the combat units.

Ehud Barak ignored the general reduction in motivation for three years. When asked, he claimed it didn't exist. Someone once asked why Defense Minister Rabin didn't do anything to investigate the phenomenon among the established, well-heeled centers of population. That's impossible, was the answer; the parents of these young people belong to the prime minister's own social circle.

If this process continues, it is liable to lead to social decline. The center of gravity in the IDF will shift to the poor, as happened in the US army, which overflowed with the poor and minority groups until recent administrations made an attempt to balance it. How successfully isn't yet clear.

It isn't yet an open wound, since the process is slow. The percentage of volunteers is still high, and if peace comes, before motivation ebbs away, nothing very terrible will happen.

But Rabin believes that peace can be firmly founded only on a strong IDF, one which can draw on huge numbers of volunteers to fill the long ranks of the paratroopers, the tank corps, and the Golani Brigade.

To reverse the trend, it isn't enough for Rabin and incoming Chief of Staff Amnon Shahak to be truthful with the public. They will need the moral strength to initiate an information campaign which drives home—out of internal conviction—what was once an old slogan: "The best and brightest for the air force." They will need to adapt it to the units in question, and give it a Nineties' slant. Only they know why they haven't got round to it yet.

(Courtesy of Ha'aretz)

An eye-opener in Gaza

DAVID ELIEZRIE

DEATH missed me by a few moments on Sunday, when a bomb killed six people in the Gaza Strip.

I had come to Israel for a few days. Having some free time, I headed south to visit old friends in Neveh Dekalim, a settlement in Gush Katif, not far from Kfar Darom. I was anticipating a pleasant afternoon of reminiscences, and maybe some sun at the local beach.

The inspiration to visit Gaza had come from Meretz's Yossi Sarid. On Friday, he had called for the dismantling of Gaza settlements. I decided that, as a personal protest, I would visit my friends and give them some moral support.

Arriving at the Kissufim military checkpoint at the entrance to the Strip, I asked for an escort. The officer in charge told me that the group of soldiers standing by was waiting to accompany the bus that was due to arrive at any moment.

Suddenly, a local settler drove up and offered to guide me into the Strip. Following him in my rented car, we turned left onto the main Gaza artery. The bus arrived minutes later, and turned right toward Kfar Darom. A suicide bomber was waiting for it.

I drove on to Neveh Dekalim. After I had greeted my friends, we began to hear ambulance sirens. Slowly, news of the bombing trickled in. My friend's eight-year-old

son remarked: "What a shame that the explosion has ruined your visit."

I was taken aback by his matter-of-fact tone. Then I realized that, for him, death is very much a part of everyday life. His father killed a terrorist in the midst of an attack on their settlement last year. His grandfather fell on the Suez front just after the Six Day War.

I DROVE back to the site of the tragedy, and spent many hours there. I witnessed the pandemonium, the pain and sorrow. Soldiers stood guard, bewildered at the knowledge that their friends lay dead and wounded.

Most striking of all was the reaction of Arabs. Some hours after the bombing, buses began to be routed around the site, passing a military checkpoint just down the road.

As the buses, filled with Arab passengers, went by, they shouted enthusiastically from the windows. They held up fingers in a V sign. Not 100 meters from the bus filled with death, local Arabs gathered behind a fence celebrating.

The day of the bombing, the prime minister reiterated the government line, that there are two kinds of Palestinians: the extremists who want to "derail" the peace

process, and the others, who want to turn over a new page in relations with Israel.

For those of us who stood at that scene of death and injury, there was only one kind of Arab, the kind that turned a day of murder into a festival.

This reaction poses a serious question about peace with the Palestinians.

It isn't just the PLO's failure to control terrorism, or the mini-police state that has been created in Gaza and Jericho. Nor is it Yasser Arafat's terrorist background.

The real question is: Are the Palestinians seriously ready for peace? Have they abandoned their old agenda, or have they just changed their tactics? Is their step-by-step plan as firm as ever, with Gaza and Jericho first, then the rest of the West Bank serving as a springboard for further confrontation with Israel?

Had the reaction of the Arabs I saw in Gaza on Sunday been one of regret and sorrow, I might have thought that we have entered a new era.

But the open joy on their faces told me otherwise. It told me that Arab tactics may have changed, but their goals remain the same.

The writer, a rabbi in Yorba Linda, California, is currently visiting the country.

Worldly concerns

THEODORE STEINBERG

ABOUT 40 years ago Horace Kallen, an American professor of philosophy, wrote a book called *Secularism: the Will of God*.

Kallen's main point was that it is not a divine but a human responsibility to make the world a pleasant and habitable place.

Put differently, taking care of the world is a secular occupation. And this, according to Kallen, is how God wants it to be.

I have always liked Kallen's idea.

Although I stand on the religious side of the spectrum, I have long felt respectful and friendly toward secularism—especially when it is not a hard-bitten ideol-

Surely there is a place where sane secularism and sane religious Judaism can meet

logical mirror-image of religious extremism.

Secularism means a serious focus on the worldly, mundane human side of things.

As such, it is not in inevitable conflict with religious Judaism and, in fact, the two are—or should be—partners in many areas.

Thanks primarily to secular sensibilities and advocacy, a host of important contemporary issues such as ecology, civic ethics, drug abuse and problems of road safety, to name just a few, have come to our attention. And these also owe something to religious values.

FOR EXAMPLE, the problems of reducing the carnage on Israel's roads will never be solved simply through better enforcement of traffic laws and the use of seat belts.

What is also needed is something that is more complicated yet, in the long run, more effective. It has to do with the way people think and feel about themselves and others when they get behind the wheel.

We do not have to search far to find such a perspective. It is there, in our own classical tradition, which is filled with wise, functional and humane values.

Two ideas which might serve as the foundation of our "rules of the road" are *kedushat ha-hayim*, respect for the sanctity of life, and *derech eretz*, which is usually translated as good manners, courtesy and generally ethical behavior.

These two concepts embody values that not only make good sense, but have the added benefit of having formed part of our common vocabulary and tradition for centuries.

While they do have religious connotations, one can hope that good ideas will be appreciated and utilized by open-minded secularists even when they originate in Jewish tradition.

Modern political Zionism is largely a secular achievement, and yet its roots irrefutably flow out of our classical religious sources.

Ironically, it is in some secular circles that Zionism is reported to have fallen on hard times, and we hear gleeful talk of a post-Zionist, and even a post-Jewish age.

Wouldn't it be terrific if the advocates of sane religious Judaism and sane secularism could join forces to renew and rehabilitate the national ideology which is sacred to both?

I don't think I am being naive.

I am convinced that there must be a meeting place between sensible, moderate secularism and equally sensible moderate Judaism, where each side respects and is willing to learn from the other.

I know this is possible because I have walked that road which combines the secular and the religious all my life.

The writer is a Conservative rabbi living in Jerusalem.

POSTSCRIPT I

THE HOST of a TV murder mystery show died on the street outside his Montreal home after being repeatedly stabbed.

Richard Niquette, 44, was a well-known actor whose last job was host of the *Murder and Mystery* program on an interactive TV channel. Viewers were invited to help solve a murder that was committed at the start of the show.

His murder is as yet unsolved.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PERSONAL PROTEST

Sir, — The majority of Israelis have anything from deep misgivings to outright hostility towards the "peace" process as it being implemented. This mass opposition arises from a diversity of fears and disappointments.

The tragedy of the situation is that we seem to be paralyzed in the face of events. It is left to a few groups to demonstrate for us all — the groups that are then desperately discredited by a government riding roughshod over the feelings of its people. Isolated protests and media outcries are not changing policy despite popular opposition. Is there a way of personal protest that has an immediate change in direction and give genuinely representative leaders the strength to implement a suspension and comprehensive review of the current "peace" process so that eventually a real peace can be achieved? I believe so.

If each and every one of those seeking a true and realistic peace would today and every day there-

after wear a green armband, the government and its visitors to our country would see the silent, peaceful but visible protest of the majority.

The Clintons, Gores and Christophers could not be prevented from seeing the seas of green reflecting our feelings. This form of protest lends itself to all the population — men and women, old and young. None need be excluded. It honors democracy and the law of the land. No government can arrest millions of its subjects for expression by means of modest dress. The only sacrifice needed is really a privilege — that of standing up and being counted for a just cause. Representative leaders would hopefully then give political effect to this common protest.

A uniform color of light green (tribute to efforts of Women in Green) would reflect the uniform desire for overhaul of the peace process that has so shocked us.

Y. SYMONDS
Jerusalem.

STUMBLING IN THE DARK

Sir, — The leaders of the Israeli government act like a playwright who has decided his play is reality. When will they stop long enough to listen to the Arabs?

The Arabs are quite honest. They hate Jews and will not live with them in peace on any level. As I read *The Jerusalem Post*, it seems that the voice of reason is Ariel Shar-

on's. I don't know why he sees so clearly and the rest of them are stumbling around unsure.

You may wish and pray for peace, but you are not going to have peace with these people until they are completely convinced that you are ready to fight, perhaps even eager to.

SHERWIN J. KADER
Shorewood, Wisconsin.

'LESE-MAJESTE'

Sir, — On March 28, I was invited to attend the address of H.M. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands to the Knesset.

I regret to say that I was thoroughly embarrassed both as an Israeli resident and as a Dutch citizen by an almost complete lack of interest for this session by the government as well as many Knesset members. Only seven ministers were

present, including the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs.

As the visit of royalty has nothing whatsoever to do with political views, I can only conclude that basic education in good manners would not be wasted on most of the members of our parliament.

A. COHEN
Yokne'am.

INCIDENT ON TEMPLE MOUNT

Sir, — I read your report of March 31 about the ejection of a group of Jews from the Temple Mount and their arrest. I was with a group of British tourists who witnessed the whole scene.

We saw a small group of women, who were violently set upon and physically abused by a group of men (who were told) were the Moslem guards of the Temple Mount. The women were forcibly carried to the doorway and then arrested.

What was most disturbing was that one of our group, who happened to photograph the whole incident, was picked out, manhandled to the exit and literally kicked out of the door by the same Moslem guards. At the same time, his camera was taken and only returned to him after the film had been ripped out. When he complained to the Israeli police on the Mount, he was told that there was nothing to be done about it, as they did not want to aggravate matters.

What was strange about this was that the same scene was photographed and filmed by at least 500 other tourists (including most of our group) and they were not subjected to the same violent "censorship."

If this is the way your Palestinian neighbors treat tourists, I am afraid they have a lot to learn.

B. MAYNARD
Jerusalem (Birmingham).

ART FEATURES

Sir, — Sitting in the sunshine on the balcony, I enjoyed reading Meir Ronnen's review of *Tail Ships* and the *Curry Sark* Races.

I'm not a fan-letter writer; these few lines are just to thank Mr. Ronnen for bringing back memories of being under sail as a teenager and — through his art features especially — for giving much-needed substance to the *Post*.

May be continue to go from strength to strength.

MIRIAM FLEISCHMAN
Nahariya.

Rilling performs Bach in all his Passion

MICHAEL AJZENSTADT

THERE was a time when Bach's monumental *St. Matthew Passion* was not performed in this country. The Christian context of the piece, which tells the story of Jesus's Passion, was considered anti-Jewish.

Conductor Helmuth Rilling, one of the world's greatest Bach specialists, is sensitive to such feelings.

"I can understand that the traditional text, which is part of the history of Christianity, was problematic. But there are no anti-Jewish feelings in the music."

Rilling, music director of the acclaimed Gächinger Kantorei - which has performed here many times - will be leading his choir and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in the IPO's first subscription-concert performance of the work.

Although all Bach's major sacred choral compositions, the *Passions* included, are performed regularly by orchestras all across the country, this IPO debut might seem somewhat awkward to many music lovers.

These days, Bach's music is usually played by much smaller ensembles whose members perform on authentic instruments, producing a much smaller and intimate sound than that of the modern symphony orchestra.

Rilling, 61, adamantly argues that there are many, equally valid ways to perform Bach.

"The *St. Matthew Passion* is, together with the *B minor Mass*,

one of the most central pieces of Bach," he says.

"It is also one of the most important oratorios ever written, and to have this piece in the IPO series is a wonderful achievement. The range of performing these pieces today is very large, from early instruments and boys' choirs to the other side of the spectrum."

Although "I'm using some early instruments, like viola da gambas and recorders, this is not the only way I do it. I prefer working with the usual instruments we find in our orchestras."

Overall, Rilling is not an advocate of the so-called performance-practice approach, which tries to imitate the exact sounds created by Bach.

"EVEN IF you would be able to completely reconstruct a performance of Bach in Leipzig conducted by himself, even if you would know exactly all the details and dynamics and tempos, this ultimately would be only half of the reconstruction because you cannot reconstruct the people who lived there, the people for whom he wrote."

Rilling's aim is "to come as close as possible to his ideas. This is the more important goal, to achieve a better result with the instruments of our time. After all, you must not alienate the ear of today's listener. I like going back to sources. I admire all the research, but I think you have to come up with a decision, what kind of sound you want to achieve. And I have made my personal choice."

Occasionally, Rilling cuts loose from Bach. "I would feel too limited performing only Baroque music, so we do a lot of Viennese

classics and 19th-century choral music, too."

The composition he is most looking forward to is a world premiere, which will be performed this August in Stuttgart with his choir and the IPO. It is a special *Requiem of Reconciliation* written to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II.

"Fourteen composers are each composing one part of a requiem," he says. "They are from the countries that were enemies in the war - Japan, the US, England, France, Italy, Germany and Russia."

Some of the composers are re-

nowned ones such as Luciano Berio, Alfred Schnittke, Wolfgang Rihm, Georgy Kurtag and Judith Weir, while others were born after the war.

The IPO was invited to perform the premiere. "The fact that the Israel Philharmonic consented to play it is a wonderful gesture."

Rilling leads his Gächinger Kantorei and the IPO in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* tonight in Haifa and Wednesday, Saturday and next Sunday and Monday at the Mann Auditorium in Tel Aviv. All start at 8 p.m.

He also leads these same musicians in a different program comprising two other major choral masterpieces - Handel's *Dixit Dominus* and Mozart's *Great C Major Mass* on April 25 and 27 in Tel Aviv, April 29 in Jerusalem and April 30 and May 1 in Haifa.

Fest: All alone are they

THEATER REVIEW
NAOMI DOUDAI

Missing Kissinger, adapted by J. Messinger and U. Hochman from a novel by E. Keret. Hagar, an excerpt from A.B. Yehoshua's novel *Mr. Mani*. Song of a Dying Whale by Gail Farnat. Translation: D. Shimko, E. Zakheim, Jordan by A. Reynolds and M. Buffini, Translators: E. Levi, Return of the Seasons by S. Seri, S. Vilozhny, Y. Lahav. The Lynx by Y. Herzberg, M. Averbuch. Translation: N. Kaplansky. Cast in these monodramas, respectively: Uri Hochman, Yarden Bar-Cochba, Estie Zakheim, Adva Edul, Sarit Seri and Tatiana Kannelis-Ollier. Theater-Netto '95 at the Suzanne Dellal Center, Neveh Tzedek, Tel Aviv.

A solitary chair is the virtually ubiquitous prop. "Stand-up comedy, sit-down tragedy," said one smiling spectator.

This year's TheaterNetto '95, an annual four-day event even in its sixth year, was a much improved affair.

Unfortunately, this random sampling of monodramas excludes the winning actor and ac-

tress - Ofer Halevi in Guy Or's *Over the Road* and Anat Ben David in her own *The End*, soon to be performed at venues around the country.

But runner-up Yarden Bar-Cochba deserved her award for her portrayal of a gutsy ingenue in *Hagar*. Directed by Hillel Nee-man, this seemingly spontaneous study of a mother-daughter confrontation was entrancing.

Two Canadian-born directors, Jack Messinger (*Kissinger*) and Howard Ripp (*Jordan*), contributed equally gripping pieces. The first, a novel, nostalgic and highly sophisticated piece about a "mod" music quintet and a remarkable comic (Uri Hochman of the mobile mouth and elastic

eyebrows) populated the stage with the life of a vibrant and colorful neighborhood. The second gave full scope to the gifts of up-and-coming tragedienne, Adva Edul, in a harrowing confession of wife abuse and infanticide. This was a shattering study of an innocent creature condemned to eternal damnation.

The *Lynx*, starring Tatiana Kannelis-Ollier and directed by Shahar Segal, was a terribly contrived pseudo-tragedy about a man's ill-treatment of a woman - neurotic rather than tragic.

By contrast, Sarit Seri's satire of a sexy nympho from Bat Yam in *Return of the Woman* was hysterically funny, if not all that connected. Finally, Estie Zakheim was a funny fat girl struggling with a far-from-glittering text in *Song of a Dying Whale*. Directed by Dalia Shimko, this was warty pathetic, if mildly amusing.

Swept away by a Georgian pianist

CONCERT ROUNDUP

THE second stage of the Eighth Arthur Rubinstein Piano Master Competition reaffirmed evaluations already evolving in the first stage, but also caused consternation and disappointment.

This critic heard eight of the 16 competitors who passed to the second stage, including three of the six pianists who made it to the semifinals.

Dalia-Gobulich from Croatia, Susuzi Aoyagi from Japan, Igor Kamenz from Germany, Alan Gampel from the US and Israeli Miri Yampolski all failed to convince and were rightly eliminated.

The three heard by this reviewer who did make it to the semifinals all seem to be potential contestants for the top three places.

Cedric Tibegehen from France is already, at 19, a mature artist. His breadth and depth of conception is stunning and his *Gaspard de la Nuit* by Ravel was one of the most magical performances of the piece this critic has heard. No less magnificent were Scriabin's *Fantasy in B minor* and his Spanish Albeniz pieces.

Russian Sergei Tarasov is a master of construction and a pianist who thinks no less than he feels.

His Avni "Triptych" - one of the two required Israeli pieces - was one of the competition's best performances of the work. Tarasov's fingers seem to be made of steel, and this assures him a firm grip on all interpretive parameters.

His recital, including pieces by Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin and Rachmaninoff, most of them monumental compositions, were all musically and technically unassailable.

The great discovery of the competition, however, was Georgian Alexander Korsantia.

This 29-year-old pianist is a phenomenon, and he is head and shoulders above even the next best. His artistic personality seems to encompass everything he is perfection.

He has a very strong character and is wise and intelligent with a natural sense of what is right and wrong.

His technique is simply frightening, and he possesses an unlimited resource of sound. When he lets a forte-fortissimo reverberate from all the four corners of the hall, you still have the impression that he is capable of producing an even bigger sound.

His *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Mussorgsky was one of the most exciting hours of the whole competition.

Tel Aviv Museum, April 2, 3, 4.

Benjamin Bar-Am

THE PRODUCTION of *The Love for Three Oranges* by Prokofiev, the latest revival by the New Israeli Opera, is neither a display of great vocalism nor stardom of any kind.

Most of the singers, with the possible exception of bass Steven Page as the King of Clubs and bass Rafael Conde as the magician Tchelio, are mediocre or even less.

Occasionally, one may even come to the far-fetched conclu-

sion that the quality of singing in this production is almost irrelevant.

All this may lead to a wrong conclusion; the performance is no flop at all. On the contrary - it is a brilliant and enjoyable production throughout. There are four reasons for its success: the sets by the brothers Quay, the costumes by Sue Blane, the lighting by Colin Smith and the direction of Richard Jones (revival director is Assaf Levin).

These four theatrical dimensions turn the stage into a succession of picturesque and incredibly imaginative, almost magical tableaux in which the chiroscuro effects create bewitching impressions. The acting is superb and each one of the team contributes to the overall achievement.

Nevertheless, special mention must be made of conductor Martin Andre, who made the Israel Symphony Orchestra Rishon Le-Zion cope successfully with Prokofiev's demanding score, and the excellent choir which, as usual, under its choirmaster Jonathan Webb, repeatedly proves to be one of the company's most precious assets.

Tel Aviv Performing Arts Center, April 7.

Benjamin Bar-Am

THE APPLE HILL Chamber Players from the US, in constantly changing combinations of its six members, provides different sonorities from piece to piece, in addition to the variety of styles and moods in its program.

In "Up Where the Air Gets Thin," a duo for cello and double bass (Paul Cohen, Richard Harshorne) by the contemporary American Libby Larsen, frequently recurring motifs and patterns almost manage to avoid the risk of repetitiveness by appearing in ever-changing contexts and paraphrases. It was a rare chance to hear these low instruments performing together.

Hartshorne, in his "Interview with the Dwarf," made a serious attempt to make the audience laugh by singing, beating his innocent double bass, joking in four languages and, in between, also producing sounds from his instrument. The audience, following the rules of the game, contributed polite laughter when expected.

The songwriter in Schubert was very much present in the rendition of his Piano Trio op. 99 (Robert Merfeld - piano, Mowry Pearson.

Cohen). The artists ostensibly savored the work's abounding melodic phrases, making even the piano sing, with the cello producing rich, warm sounds.

The impassioned quality of the playing made up for some lack of polish.

Pianist Eric Stumacher injected additional energy into a sparkling performance of Dvorak's Piano Quartet op. 23, with violist Betty Hauck joining in.

Jerusalem Music Center, Mishkenot Sha'ananim, April 3.

Ury Eppstein

WHEN A music school such as the Jerusalem Rubin Academy presents a demanding program like Fauré's *Requiem* and opera excerpts, expectations naturally run high.

It is nice to be able to report that these were fulfilled by the performance of the *Requiem*. The soft, mellow, well-blended voices of the Academy and Tel Aviv Philharmonic choirs - conducted by Aharon Harlap, featuring transparent textures, pure intonation and sensitive nuances of dynamics - coupled with the well-rehearsed Academy Orchestra, captured the spirit of perhaps one of the most elusive and subtle of *Requiem*s.

The dark-timbered, smooth baritone of Michael Greenberg sounded like an appropriate endowment of a liturgical solo singer, and so did the clear, expressive, yet tastefully restrained, soprano of Rosanne Rog.

As high as the expectations were in the operatic selections, so deep was the disappointment.

In this embarrassing performance, which proceeded on a high-school-party level, there was, at best, one promising young singer who seemed to possess some of the qualities conducive to an eventual landing on the operatic stage - Shira Green.

Her endearingly bright voice, natural charm, intelligently controlled dramatic expression and delightful sense of shaping musical phrases appear worthwhile cultivating, especially if some sharp edges in her high register are rounded off.

Roles as different as Mozart's Figaro and Don Giovanni, and Bizet's Toreador from *Carmen*, require more differentiation of character than Michael Greenberg seemed capable of imparting, in spite of his remarkable vocal talents.

Jerusalem Rubin Academy, April 5.

Ury Eppstein



Nothing compares to her

SOUL-baring Irish singer/songwriter Sinead O'Connor, whose latest disc *Universal Mother* is graced with a Star of David, will be giving two concerts here in June.

The 29-year-old star has often made an impression on the general public well outside the realm of music.

Her shaved head (she has since allowed her hair to grow out slightly) made a big impression in the late '80s, when she first came on the scene.

O'Connor alienated many fans in 1993, when she tore up a picture of Pope John Paul II on US television as a political statement about the Church's attitude toward women. She has since toned down her act, but retains a penchant for publicly probing her own psyche.

O'Connor is scheduled to perform at the Roman Amphitheater in Caesarea on June 12 and at Jerusalem's Sultan's Pool on June 15.

Ruth Kern

Modern troupe from Budapest brings in the 'Spanish Sun'

AUDIENCES had a right to high hopes for Jerusalem's Budapest Week.

For dance lovers there were two special attractions: a folk-dance company and a modern-dance group.

The Ferenc Erkel Folklore Troupe at the gala opening last

Tuesday in the Rebecca Crown Auditorium lived up to all expectations. The bright peasant costumes, vigorous dancing and live musicians simulated an authentic mood.

Bella Pundi's Contemporary Dance Company also participated in the gala opening with *Spanish Sun*. An extended, more varied version of this work was showcased on April 6.

On the *Bench* was a comedy of dance and banter by six performers who, vying for places on the eponymous bench, sparred and flirted vivaciously and engagingly.

More somber were a poetically conceived *Requiem for Youth*, set to Dvorak music and choreographed by Attila Agazzi, and *Resurrection of Souls*, choreographed by Bella Pundi.

Nothing was characteristically Hungarian about anything in the program.

Dora Sowden

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TOWER RECORDS' TOP 15

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEKS ON CHARTS	ARTIST	TITLE
#1	1	ARIK EINHORN	FILLED WITH LOVE
#2	RE	PAVAROTTI, ET AL	THREE TENORS
#3	11	RAMI KLEINSTEIN	APPLES AND DATES
#4	NEW	SHALOM HANOCHI	VIOLENCE
#5	NEW	HAVA ALBERSTEIN	ONE WAY
#6	17	B. SPRINGSTEEN	GREATEST HITS
#7	8	FLA SOUND TRACK	PULP FICTION
#8	33	THE GRAND LOVE	NO NEED TO ARGUE
#9	7	CRANBERRIES	MEDUSA
#10	2	ANNIE LENNOX	THE WEATHERMAN KNOWS
#11	9	AVTIPIUS	WONDERFUL WORLD OF ...
#12	4	NICK CAVE	WOUNDS AND KISSES
#13	20	MONICA SEX	COMPILED
#14	RE	YEHUDIT RAVITZ	MADE IN ENGLAND
#15	3	ELTON JOHN	

Tower Records' top-selling albums for the previous week. RE - re-entry

BUSINESS & FINANCE

TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 1995

Brodet: Inflation will fall to 10% in '95

TREASURY director general David Brodet yesterday said he expects inflation will drop to 10 percent this year.

"We are very optimistic about inflation in 1995," he said. "We are confident we will be within the inflation target of 8%-11%. I believe inflation will be 10%."

Last year's target was 8%, but inflation actually reached 14.5%. Asked whether he was satisfied with interest rate levels, Brodet indirectly hinted he would be happy if the Bank of Israel would further lower rates.

"We hope the lower rate of inflation will be part of the consideration for fixing interest rates for 1995," he said.

The government will issue tradeable bonds abroad this year to test how foreign capital markets will receive those issues now

JOSE ROSENFELD

that the country has an official Standard & Poor's credit rating of BBB+.

Brodet noted that the country does not need to raise additional funds, but the issue would prepare the ground when such issues will be needed in the future.

Israel's financing needs are currently covered by \$2 billion in US loan guarantees a year, until the end of 1997.

After Pessah, the Treasury will determine the size of the issue, as well as pick the market and the investment bank to be responsible for the bond issue.

Brodet confirmed that the ministerial privatization committee had again approved the sale of Israel Shipyard to SKO-Car, and the Knesset Finance Committee

will consider again the government's request to sell the shipyards at the end of the week.

Brodet denied that Israel Chemicals' (ICL) foreign issue of 22% of its shares would be delayed. He said the issue will go ahead as scheduled in May.

Brodet justified the six-month delay of El Al's privatization as a way to give the government enough time to check out all the options so the sale succeeds.

Government revenues from privatization were approximately \$600m. in the first quarter, and the Treasury has budgeted \$1.5b. in revenues from the sale of state firms this year.

Brodet expects the sale of a controlling interest in Bank Hapoalim to bring in a significant portion of this year's privatization revenues.

THE trade deficit inched down 2.6 percent last month to \$848.9 million, as record high imports were partially offset by a 17% surge in exports, the Central Bureau of Statistics reported yesterday.

Exports rose to \$1.54 billion from \$1.32b. in February, while imports increased a more moderate 9.2% to \$2.39b. from \$2.19b.

The bureau attributed the high import levels to the purchase of a freight plane and a rise in fuel purchases.

Seasonally adjusted figures - excluding ships, airplanes and diamonds - showed a drop in exports of 2% in the past quarter from the previous quarter.

Most of the decrease was concentrated in machinery, electronics and transportation vehicle

17% jump in exports keeps trade gap in check

JOSE ROSENFELD

equipment, quality control equipment and machinery exports decreased between 6% and 3%, while plastic and rubber exports rose 13%.

Similarly, electronic component, office equipment and computer exports increased 8%, metal products 5.5% and clothing and textiles 3%.

Diamond exports averaged \$333m. a month in the past quarter, a 1.4% rise, while agricultural exports increased 3%.

Consumer imports jumped 14%, compared with 6.5% in the previous quarter.

Non-durable imports rose 12%, while imports of cars went up 10% and electric appliances soared 22%.

Chemical, telecommunication

Production input imports, excluding diamonds and fuel, increased 8.5%.

Iron and steel imports shot up 32%, while non-ferrous metal imports rose 18%.

Cloth, thread, rubber and plastic imports increased between 13% and 11%, while electronic components, chemical products and raw material for paper production rose between 6% and 4%.

By contrast, wood and wood product imports fell 13% and raw food product imports fell 3%.

Investment goods imports - such as machinery, equipment, and vehicles - increased 7.5% in the past quarter, with vehicle imports diving 24%.

Fuel imports jumped 46% in the past quarter to \$570m.

State attorney opens probe of insurance companies

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

THE State Attorney's Office economic division is investigating suspicions that insurance companies have agreed among themselves not to compete with each other in several fields of activity.

The probe follows a complaint filed by the Kiryat Malachi city council with the Industry and Trade Ministry's anti-trust division.

Eli Dokraski, a member of the Kiryat Malachi city council, yesterday said the anti-trust division has given the state attorney information regarding alleged suspicions of a binding agreement among insurance companies insuring city councils.

"Dokraski's complaint was combined with an investigation of suspicions that insurance companies have reached binding agreements in several fields of activity," anti-trust division lawyer Asher Gushen said. "The Anti-Trust division's findings were transferred to the State Attorney Office's economic division, which will consider filing a charge sheet."

Rimon Ben-Shaul, chairman of the Insurance Companies Association, could not be reached for comment.

The episode started in July 1992, following the Kiryat Malachi municipality's publication of a tender to appoint a company to insure the city council.

The only company to participate in the tender was Migdal, which until then had insured the council for 27 years.

In a letter to the local council members, Ya'acov Yardeni, Kiryat Malachi treasurer, said "Unfortunately the insurance companies have reached an agreement whereby they will not compete against each other on large insurance policies. For this reason, the existing insurance company [Migdal] is holding us captive."

Yardeni added that Migdal's proposal was 256 percent higher than the existing insurance policy. In the complaint, which was submitted to the Anti-Trust division, the city council attacked the treasurer's letter and also a letter from attorney Yigal Sagi, the Local Authorities insurance adviser.

"Many of the recently published city council tenders have failed, since competing insurance companies did not submit bids," Sagi said. "The existing insurer was the only one to submit a bid."

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Eurotunnel reports £387 million loss last year, says it's £8 billion in debt

LONDON (AP) - As the Channel Tunnel prepares for summer travelers, operators wonder whether the peak season will bring in enough money to keep bankers happy.

Eurotunnel said yesterday it lost £386.9 million last year on revenues of £30.6m.

More importantly, revenues were less than a quarter of what Eurotunnel had projected about a year ago when it tapped shareholders for £816m. to stay in business.

Eurotunnel has said a revenue shortfall was inevitable because the tunnel opened to the public many months late.

The company is £8 billion in debt. Interest charges are about £2m. a day, according to Graham Corbett, Eurotunnel's chief financial officer.

Eurotunnel grimly announced yesterday that the interest payments could wipe out the company if revenues don't pick up.

"Eurotunnel is at risk," co-chairman Sir Alastair Morton and Patrick Ponsolle said in a statement. "In 1995, we may succeed or we may fail. Our debt service costs may overwhelm us."

That potentially could mean that somebody other than current shareholders would end up enjoying profits from the tunnel - if any - sometime in the next century.

In a news conference, Eurotunnel executives tried to paint a more optimistic picture, expressing surprise that the stock plunged as the company released its losses and revenue figures from 1994.



Co-chairman Sir Alastair Morton: Our debt service costs may overwhelm us. (AP)

"Today's financial statement is not some kind of farewell note," Morton said in London. "We are not going bust."

In Paris, Ponsolle said Eurotunnel might try to issue bonds late in the year.

Some analysts predict Eurotunnel needs to be refinanced - perhaps by asking shareholders for more money.

This peak summer vacation season will be a crucial test for the tunnel, built at a cost of £10b.

and still working out the bugs.

The tunnel still has some cash on hand, and bankers have agreed to put up enough money to see the tunnel through the summer. After that, they are going to demand a progress report from Eurotunnel.

The tunnel has yet to operate at full capacity, and Eurotunnel said revenues had come up short through the end of the first quarter. This leaves Eurotunnel in a

precarious situation as it works to pay off bankers.

Investors responded to the news by dumping Eurotunnel stock. The shares dropped 10 percent in London, where they closed at 216 pence. The shares fell by 6.5 percent in Paris, to close at FR 17.40.

"If our analysts and our shareholders are worried when we confirmed we're at risk, which you already knew, then so be it," Morton told reporters.

Medina named Mizrahi chairman

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

FORMER Israel Chemicals chairman Victor Medina will be appointed United Mizrahi Bank chairman, the Ofer-Wertheim group announced yesterday.

Medina will take over at the next general meeting from Chaim Kubersky, who announced his plans to resign.

Mizrahi's owners, Muzi Wertheim and Yuli Ofer, said they will decide on a new general manager soon.

Mizrahi's current general man-

ager, David Blumberg, hopes to resign in September, but he said he will temporarily stay on if a candidate is not found.

Mizrahi is looking for candidates within its senior management and at other banks.

There have also been rumors that Mizrahi comptroller Reuven Adler has been proposed as a candidate. Others include Ehud Shapira, Bank Leumi's credit division head, and Avi Zeldman, head of banking at Leumi.

Profits fall at Elco Holdings

COMPANY RESULTS

RACHEL NEIMAN

ELCO Holdings reported a decline in annual net profits to NIS 84.9 million from NIS 97.3m. in 1993, while earnings per share fell to NIS 7.34 from NIS 6.74.

Revenues rose to NIS 1.5m. from NIS 1.2m.

The company, which owns Elco Industries (77 percent), Electra (63%), Electra Consumer Goods (80%) and Shekem (43%) experienced a NIS 29.9m. gain on investments last year.

Kvallm announced a drop in annual net profits to NIS 36.7m. from NIS 47.24m. in 1993, while earnings per share fell to NIS 2.06 from NIS 2.71.

Annual revenues decreased to

NIS 283.28m. from NIS 321.8m. Red Sea Hotels reported a drop in annual net profits to NIS 7.46m. from NIS 12m. in 1993, while earnings per share fell to NIS 0.42 from NIS 0.67.

Revenues went up to NIS 55.5m. from NIS 42.5m.

Sahar Insurance reported a net loss of NIS 1.8m., compared with a net gain of NIS 5.7m. in 1993.

Revenues on life insurance rose to NIS 16.6m. from NIS 16.1m.

Losses on general insurance were NIS 7.2m., compared with a gain of NIS 4.5m. in 1993. Total revenues declined to NIS 9.3m. from NIS 20.7m.

Court approves JOEL nomination

RACHEL NEIMAN

THE Tel Aviv District Court yesterday approved JOEL chairman Joe Elmalich's compromise solution on the nomination of his company's representative to Naphtha's board of directors.

Attorney Haim Indig will serve as JOEL's new representative.

Elmalich's original nomination, Dani Toledano, was opposed by Naphtha.

The board filed a suit against Elmalich on Friday, claiming Toledano's position as JOEL's deputy chairman would create a conflict of interest.

La Nationale reports 60% drop in net profits

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

LA Nationale insurance yesterday reported a 60 percent drop in annual net profits to NIS 21.17 million from NIS 53.44m. in 1993.

As a result of the plunge in earnings, La Nationale managing director Moshe Pereg agreed to give up on half the annual bonus to which he is entitled as part of his work agreement with the company.

Pereg will receive a NIS 3.7m. bonus, instead of NIS 7.4m.

In reaction to the drop in the company's earnings, La Nationale shares plunged 8% on the stock exchange.

The drop in earnings was mainly due to the company's execution of several reinsurance trans-

actions, which led to a rise in purchasing costs and a growth in reinsurance companies' debts to La Nationale.

The decrease in profits also reflected NIS 41.4m. in redemptions.

Profits from the life insurance division more than halved to NIS 38.38m. from NIS 92.67m.

Total premiums from the life insurance sector increased to NIS 468m. from NIS 306m. Life insurance claims went up to NIS 127.5m. from NIS 58m.

Losses from elementary insurance increased to NIS 8.62m. from NIS 3.27m. in 1993. Premiums from the elementary insurance sector rose to NIS 45m. from NIS 32.5m.

Israel, China sign investment protection treaty

JOSE ROSENFELD

FINANCE Minister Avraham Shohat and Chinese Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation Minister Wu Yi yesterday signed an investment protection treaty and an agreement to extend a \$150 million line of credit to Israeli companies investing in China, the Treasury reported.

Treasury officials have emphasized the importance of the treaty following the difficulties foreign investors have had with Chinese authorities.

The treaty protects investors from both countries against discrimination and acts that will decrease the value of their investments.

In addition, the treaty guarantees the right of investors to realize their investment at any time they desire.

Shohat also signed an unprece-

dened protocol on financial cooperation between the two countries which will provide a \$150m. line of credit to Israeli companies investing in China through the Israel Foreign Trade Risk Insurance Corporation (IFTRIC).

The line of credit is essential to close deals in China, since investors must come armed with financing under preferential terms, Treasury officials said.

Investors will be eligible to use the line of credit for projects approved by both countries.

Wu Yi said the agreements will facilitate both countries' penetration of each other's markets and noted the great potential for investment in both countries.

Wu Yi is scheduled to visit here in September, when a joint Israel-China trade committee will meet.

ISRAELI MONEY MARKETS

Patah (foreign currency deposit rates) (10.4.95)			
Currency (deposit for)	3 MONTHS	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS
U.S. dollar (\$250,000)	5.375	5.000	5.075
U.S. dollar (\$100,000)	4.825	5.000	5.075
French franc (FF 200,000)	3.125	3.125	3.825
Swiss franc (SF 200,000)	2.125	2.125	2.825
Yen (10 million yen)	0.250	0.125	0.125

(Rates vary higher or lower than indicated according to deposit)

Shekel Foreign Exchange Rates* (10.4.95)			
CHECKS AND TRANSFERS	Buy	Sell	Rep. Rates**
Currency basket	3.4286	3.4839	3.4610
U.S. dollar	2.9326	2.9802	2.9550
German mark	2.1022	2.1341	2.1178
French franc	4.8690	4.7768	4.7388
Japanese yen (100)	0.6041	0.6139	0.6093
Dutch guilder	3.5423	3.5995	3.5744
Swiss franc	1.6743	1.6946	1.6844
Swedish krona	2.5570	2.5893	2.5731
Norwegian krona	0.3988	0.4023	0.4005
Denmark krone	0.4884	0.4921	0.4892
Finland mark	0.5334	0.5381	0.5352
Canadian dollar	0.6948	0.6980	0.6960
Australian dollar	2.1178	2.1520	2.1349
S. African rand	2.1763	2.2094	2.1928
Belgian franc (10)	0.8156	0.8288	0.8222
Austrian schilling (10)	1.0214	1.0379	1.0296
Italian lira (1000)	2.9818	3.0239	3.0028
Jordanian dinar	1.7418	1.7718	1.7568
Israeli pound (100)	—	—	—
Irish punt	3.8718	3.9243	3.8980
Spanish peseta (100)	4.7211	4.7973	4.7592
—	2.3500	2.3880	2.3690

* These rates vary according to bank. ** Bank of Israel.

SOURCE: BANK LEUMI

Greeks square off in Final Four tonight

ZARAGOZA (Reuter) - Athens comes to Spain this week as Olympiakos and Panathinaikos, the colossi of Greek basketball, head the field in the European Club Champions Final Four.

The Greeks, who topped their respective final pools and enjoy a fanatical rivalry, lock horns in a potentially explosive semifinal tonight.

The winners take on either Real Madrid or Limoges, who get Europe's top basketball tournament under way in the other semifinal earlier today.

Olympiakos, which lost last year's final by a single basket to Joventut Badalona, is a narrow favorite to win the competition.

Olympiakos has an array of domestic and foreign talent but will rely on veteran NBA scorer Eddie Johnson on offense and George Sigalas, back after breaking a leg, on defense.

If Olympiakos has an Achilles heel, it is against Limoges - a team it has never beaten in any European competition and to whom it lost twice during the season.

Panathinaikos, which finished third last year, has had to rebuild its team following the retirement

of the country's top player, Niki Gallis, earlier this season. Its title campaign has been headed by Montenegrin forward Zarko Paspalj and Greek national captain Panayotis Yannakis.

Over 3,000 Greeks have made the trip west and Spanish police are taking no chances. More than 1,000 officers have been drafted into Zaragoza, where last week they had to deal with rioting soccer fans from Chelsea.

Real Madrid, runners-up in the Group A final pool, relies on the height of Lithuanian Arvidas Sabonis and the point-scoring of forward Joe Arlauskas. The coach is Zeljko Obradovic, seeking his third European triumph in four years, all with different clubs.

In 1992 he took Partizan Belgrade to the European title and last year coached Joventut Badalona to success.

When Obradovic missed out in 1993, it was Limoges which took the title, the first French team ever to do so.

They bring 1,200 fans across the Pyrenees and will be looking to American Michael Young and former NBA player Tim Kemp-ton to lead their attack.

Indiana's bench hushes sweet Charlotte, 97-68

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) - The Indiana Pacers took a major step toward their first NBA divisional title Sunday, beating Charlotte 97-68 as their bench totally outplayed the Hornets' reserves.

Indiana's reserves outscored Charlotte's 25-2 in the first three quarters, helping the Pacers build a 69-52 advantage, and Indiana cruised home to take a three-game lead over the Hornets for the Central Division lead.

It was the fewest points allowed by Indiana since it joined the NBA in 1976. Rick Smith led a balanced Indiana offense with 18 points. Larry Johnson scored 24 points for Charlotte.

Bucks 102, Hawks 99. Glenn Robinson had 32 points and nine rebounds for host Milwaukee, which overcame a 17-point, third-quarter deficit.

SUNDAY'S RESULTS:
Indiana 97, Charlotte 68
Boston 110, Washington 68
Cleveland 73, Chicago 70
Milwaukee 102, Atlanta 99
Phoenix 104, Portland 94
Houston 123, Denver 120
San Antonio 101, LA Lakers 87

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
*Orlando	54	21	.720	-
*New York	49	25	.662	4.5
Boston	32	43	.427	22
Miami	28	46	.382	26
New Jersey	28	47	.373	26
Philadelphia	21	54	.280	33
Washington	18	57	.240	36

Central Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
*Indiana	48	25	.658	-
*Charlotte	45	28	.615	3
*Chicago	41	34	.547	7.5
Cleveland	40	35	.533	8.5
Atlanta	37	38	.488	11.5
Milwaukee	30	45	.400	18.5
Detroit	27	47	.365	21

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Midwest Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
*San Antonio	56	18	.757	-
*Utah	53	22	.707	3
*Houston	44	31	.587	12.5
Denver	35	40	.473	21
Dallas	33	40	.450	22.5
Minnesota	30	54	.357	26

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
*Seattle	53	21	.716	-
*Phoenix	53	22	.707	.5
*LA Lakers	47	28	.627	6.5
Portland	39	35	.527	14
San Diego	35	39	.473	18
Golden State	25	51	.331	30
LA Clippers	18	59	.233	37.5

*clinched playoff berth

Aussies lose both openers to Walsh

ST JOHN'S, Antigua (Reuter) - Courtney Walsh dismissed Australian openers Mark Taylor and Michael Slater during two rain-shortened sessions of the third day of the second Test against West Indies yesterday.

At tea, they were 60 for two in their second innings - just 16 runs ahead.

Taylor, the Australian skipper, was out for the second time in the match trying to hook.

He departed for five during the 30-minute morning session when he swished at a short ball from Walsh and succeeded only in edging to wicketkeeper Junior Murray.

A brilliant, diving catch at third slip by West Indies captain Richie Richardson accounted for Slater during an equally short afternoon session.

His dismissal for 18 gave Walsh his eighth wicket of the match.

Crenshaw edges Love to win 2nd Masters

AUGUSTA (AP) - Ben Crenshaw won his second Masters on Sunday with brilliant putting over the last six holes, edging out Davis Love III by one stroke. His confident silky stroke came because of a lesson from master golf teacher Harvey Penick.

Crenshaw, troubled because his putter had lost a little magic, visited the 90-year-old, bedridden Penick at his home.

Penick gave him the confidence he needed. Apparently, it was an instant cure.

Penick died a week ago and Crenshaw helped bury him Wednesday, the day before the Masters. Crenshaw flew from Augusta to Austin, Texas, then flew back to Augusta to make his Thursday tee time.

On Sunday, Crenshaw had the lesson to fall back on when things got tight around Amen Corner, where the putting stroke has to be tension free.

Crenshaw came to the devilish, 155-yard, par-3 No. 12 one shot ahead of Davis Love III. Crenshaw's tee shot hit just over the front bunker and rolled back into the sand.

Crenshaw's shot from the sand left him 2 yards from the cup. Before he could putt, the cheers from Love's birdie on No. 14 reached him. He made the 2-yarder to stay at 13-under.

The 43-year-old Texan approached the tee on the 485-yard, par-5 No. 13 knowing

he needed a birdie on a hole most of the players were shooting under par. Crenshaw's wedge to the green left him a 5-meter putt, which he deftly made for a birdie.

Love finished 13-under after Crenshaw parred Nos. 14 and 15. Crenshaw lashed his 6-iron to within a yard of the pin on the 170-yard, par-3 No. 16, which is bordered by water down the left side.

Crenshaw made the left-to-right putt to take a one-shot lead. The ball died in the hole, just as Penick had taught him when Crenshaw was a teen-ager.

Crenshaw, who won the Masters in 1984 with an astonishing putting exhibition that

included a 22-yard putt on the 10th green, gave himself a two-shot cushion on the 400-yard, par-4 No. 17. His 9-iron second shot landed 12 feet from the hole.

He accurately read the left to right break again and the ball trickled in the hole.

Crenshaw played short and he chipped. His second shot was short and he chipped to within 4 yards. Needing only a two-putt, Crenshaw nursed his lag putt within a foot of the hole. And then he dropped it in.

TOP 10: Ben Crenshaw 70-67-69-68 - 274 Davis Love III 69-71-66 - 275 Greg Norman 73-68-68-68 - 277 Jim Furyk 71-64-72-70 - 277 David Frost 66-71-71-71 - 279 Steve Elkington 73-67-67-72 - 279 Paul Michelson 66-71-70-73 - 280 Scott Hoch 69-67-71-73 - 280 Curtis Strange 72-71-65-73 - 281 Fred Couples 71-69-67-75 - 283



FROM PUNT TO BUNT - Cincinnati outfielder Deion Sanders, who plays in the defensive backfield for the NFL's San Francisco 49ers, lays down a bunt in Reds' training camp in Plant City, Florida in preparation for the beginning of the exhibition season on Thursday. (AP)

Birdie-watching in Augusta

SPORTSWATCH

ARYEH DEAN COHEN

wonder what the celebration was all about.

I hadn't followed a tournament really closely in a while, so I was pleasantly surprised by what for me was something new: golf stats. We're not just talking leader boards, but periodic displays of players' performances in various tournaments. They may never replace baseball statistics, but golf stats were a definite boon in handicapping the tournament.

There are reports that CNN's demands for considerably more money is causing tension in negotiations with local cable suppliers over continued broadcasts. It looks like Ted Turner has upped the ante, but judging by another *This Week in the NBA* we caught Sunday night, our cable people should pony up whatever they can to extend the contract.

With up-to-date NBA action still depressingly absent from our local screens, Bob Lorenz and Mike Glenn crammed an amaz-

ingly entertaining show into a short half-hour time period Sunday at 6:30 pm.

We especially liked the graphic on the San Antonio Spurs' "Hair Apparents" to injured forward Dennis (What Color Is My Hair Today?) Rodman, and the feature on the great job the Spurs are doing without him since he was injured in a motorcycle accident.

This Week in the NBA has also added live interviews, with the Pistons' Grant Hill featured Sunday night, and the "In Case You Missed It" segment still features great bits, like Dallas players examining their uniform bottoms after losing yet another time at Boston Garden, with Lorenz explaining they were wondering "how they came up short" each time in Boston. A late-night, post-game version is also offered in the US, which should be added to the CNN skein ASAP.

Negotiations are also on between the NBA and Sports Channel about playoff broadcasts, according to a Sports Channel spokeswoman. The question is: what took them so long?

What more could go wrong for Utd?

MANCHESTER (AP) - Last season, Alex Ferguson and his team were all smiles as Manchester United achieved its first league and cup double. No one's smiling now.

This season has been a catalogue of misery for United, which is set to lose the league title, failed to make the last eight of the European Champions Cup and could wind up with nothing at all.

Off the field, it's been even worse. Star players Eric Cantona and Paul Ince ended up in court after clashes with spectators, and in the latest incident, United fans were involved in a brawl Sunday that left a Crystal Palace fan dead.

Ince has denied assault and still has to be tried, but Cantona was sentenced to two weeks in jail for assaulting Palace fan Matthew Simmons in a kung-fu-style attack at Selhurst Park. On appeal, Cantona had his sentence reduced to 120 hours community service but the French striker has been banned by the English FA until October.

Without Cantona, United's Premier League challenge has faltered and Ferguson's team is eight points behind Blackburn

with only six games remaining.

And to make matters worse, Cantona has lost his player-of-the-year award to Blackburn's Alan Shearer.

Cantona is also a target for wealthy Italian club Inter Milan and, unless he comes up with a new deal, he may never play for the Reds again.

United's record sum for Andy Cole could be a bust; and Ukrainian winger Andrei Kanchelskis, one of the stars of the team's double triumph last season, appears to have fallen out with Ferguson after demanding a guaranteed starting place on the team.

United fans were involved in a brawl with Palace supporters Sunday before the FA Cup semifinal at Villa Park, Birmingham. The violence, involving 100 fans, may have been sparked by bad feelings over the Cantona incident. It ended with a Palace supporter, 35-year-old Paul Nixon, dead on a pub parking lot after he had fallen under the wheels of a bus.

The game ended in a 2-2 tie, United twice coming back from a goal behind. The replay is at Villa Park tomorrow (Live coverage on Sports Channel at 9:35 pm).

Mac Netanya selling players to keep afloat

ORI LEWIS

BOTTOM of the table Maccabi Netanya, in dire financial straits, has decided to sell off some of its soccer players as a last resort.

Netanya is now at the bottom of the National League for the first time in 11 years. With only six matches left, safety in the top flight is far from assured.

Avishai Janno, currently one of the team's stars, has been put up for sale. Janno is said to have been offered to a team in the indoor soccer league in the US, but Maccabi Haifa boss Ya'akov Shahar has also been approached.

Even the sale or loan of as many as 12 players, including internationals Moshe Ghan, Ronny Levy and Shai Holtzman have failed to stop the slide.

In other news, the national squads will convene for a first training session for their European Championship qualifying matches in Poland later this month.

The national squad will play its Polish counterpart on Tuesday, April 25 in Zabrze, with the under-21 side playing the day before.

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Indyk, Muashar present credentials to Weizman

GREER FAY CASHMAN

US AMBASSADOR Martin Indyk and Jordanian Ambassador Marwan Jamil Muashar yesterday presented their credentials to President Ezer Weizman.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, Foreign Ministry Director-General Uri Savir and his deputy Eitan Bentsur, and Eitan Haber, head of the Prime Minister's Office, were on hand to join in the toasts.

"This is a happy and a sad day for me and the United States," said Indyk. "It is happy because I came here on a mission for the president and the secretary of state to strengthen relations and promote the cause of real peace. It is a sad day because along with the Israelis killed and injured in the terrorist outrage, an American citizen is in a critical condition." The American, 20-year-old Alisa Flatow from West Orange, N.J., died yesterday.

Reviewing the close ties between America and Israel, Indyk recalled that America had stood alongside the State of Israel at its creation and at the signing of peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan. "We are at your side to share your greatest tragedies and we are at your side to share your greatest triumphs," he said.

In a reference to the previous day's conversation between US Secretary of State Warren Christopher and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, Indyk said that in order for the peace process to go forward, the Palestinian Authority must take stronger measures "to ensure that there is no haven for terrorism in Gaza."

The US needs to see a 100 percent effort, he said, adding: "We are not satisfied with the effort undertaken to date."

After expressing pride in being



President Ezer Weizman and US Ambassador Martin Indyk raise a toast upon the presentation of Indyk's credentials. He is the first Jew to serve as US ambassador to Israel. (Isaac Harari)

his country's first ambassador to Israel, Jordanian Ambassador Marwan Jamil Muashar declared, "We certainly condemn these terrorist acts in the strongest possible terms. These acts are meant to derail the peace process." The only way to counter such attacks, he said, "is to accelerate the peace process."

Reiterating Jordan's commitment and that of the Palestinian Authority to the peace process, Muashar said "we must try harder to prevent the anti-peace camp from succeeding."

Yesterday's ceremonies repre-

sented a break in protocol. Instead of retiring with the envoys for a private meeting, Weizman took them out into the Beit Hanassi garden, where he frustrated reporters by being in full view but out of earshot.

In a second break with protocol, Weizman, who is usually antagonistic towards the media, ushered Indyk towards the huge phalanx of reporters, TV cameramen and stills photographers and invited him to talk to them.

The second time around, it was Peres who introduced Muashar to

the press.

"We've come a long way since the peace process started in Madrid," commented Muashar, who between 1991 and 1994 was a member of the Jordanian delegation to the peace talks and its official spokesman.

Asked which Arab country he thought would be next to despatch an envoy to Israel, Peres replied, "I think it might be Morocco." Turning to Savir, Weizman boomed, "Bring the Syrian [ambassador]. Let's see you do it."



Jordanian Ambassador Marwan Jamil Muashar sits wrapped in an Israeli flag at yesterday's ceremony at Beit Hanassi. (Isaac Harari)

Shamir moved by ceremony

HERB KEINON

AMMAN

ISRAEL'S first ambassador to Jordan, Shimon Shamir, presented his credentials to Crown Prince Hassan yesterday in what Shamir described as a "very moving" ceremony.

Shamir said Hassan asked him to convey his condolences to the families of the Gaza Strip attacks, and said he was "shocked" by the incident.

Shamir was one of eight new ambassadors who presented their credentials in Jordan yesterday in a ceremony at the Basman Palace in Amman.

The credentials were presented to Hassan rather than King Hussein because the king is currently abroad.

The press was not allowed into the ceremony, but Shamir said that many countries around the world do not allow the press to attend such ceremonies, and that it should not be interpreted as an attempt to play down the event.

An honor guard of 50 soldiers stood at attention and saluted when "Hatikva" was played in the Jordanian palace.

Shamir said Hassan reiterated Jordan's commitment to the development and continuation of the peace process.

In a meeting with deputy foreign minister Yossi Beilin, Hassan said he hoped Sunday's attacks in Gaza would not disrupt the peace process.

Ross starts preparations for next economic summit

HERB KEINON

AMMAN

THE follow-up to last year's Casablanca economic conference will be held in Amman between October 24-November 1 to try and further "the economic underpinnings to peace," US special emissary Dennis Ross said yesterday.

Ross, who headed the US delegation to a steering committee meeting in Amman yesterday to begin preparing for the October conference, said that "our objectives should be that the material benefits of peace be felt as quickly as possible."

According to Ross, yesterday's meeting "makes it clear that seeking to develop the material benefits of peace is an ongoing effort that is going to persist and move ahead."

Among those attending yesterday's conference at the Forte Grand Hotel in Amman, which also houses the Israeli embassy, were representatives from Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Egypt, the PLO, Japan, Russia, the Economic Community and the US. Noticeably absent, however, were any representatives from the Gulf States.

Israeli officials in Amman would not deny that anger over Jordan's support of Iraq during the Gulf War was the reason that the Gulf States did not attend yesterday's meeting. Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi

Beilin said he believes the US "will make an effort" to persuade the Gulf States to attend the conference in October.

The PLO's delegation to the meeting also made a veiled threat to boycott October's conference. Samir Abdallah, a high-ranking official in the Palestinian Authority's economic ministry, told the meeting that if the "economic situation in Gaza does not improve, there will be no reason for the Palestinians to attend an economic conference."

Israeli officials downplayed the

threat, however, saying that it was a way for the Palestinians to get the message about their dire economic conditions across to the international community.

Beilin, who characterized yesterday's meeting as "very, very good," said the Amman conference will be about half the size of the Casablanca conference, attended by some 2,000 delegates and which was highly political. This time, he said, the emphasis will be "on making money in the Middle East."

Nevertheless, the final day of the conference will deal with political matters, and will likely be attended by a number of different heads of state.

Northern settlements call off strike

DAVID RUDGE

HEADS of confrontation line settlements called off a strike that was to have been staged in towns and villages along the Lebanese border yesterday.

Metulla local council head Yossi Goldberg, who heads the forum, said the scheduled one-day shutdown had been postponed because of the security situation and promises by the government to deal with outstanding problems.

Representatives of the forum of heads of confrontation line settlements, led by Goldberg, met with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and other ministers and officials in Jerusalem yesterday.

It was the second meeting with Rabin following the decision by the council heads at an emergency gathering in Nahariya last week to stage a strike to protest what they described as the disregard by successive governments of their settlements' plight.

This followed Katyusha rocket attacks on Nahariya and Kiryat Shmuna at the end of last month in which Benny Unassi, 17, from Nahariya was killed and more than 12 people were wounded.

Rabin told the council leaders at the meeting yesterday that he had instructed the special committee of directors-general of ministries dealing with the confrontation line settlements to investigate all the problems and submit a detailed report within three weeks.

The director-general of the Prime Minister's Office, Shimon Sheves, said at the meeting that NIS 550 million would be invested in the confrontation line settlements this year, in addition to special projects such as the construction of new classrooms.

The meeting was also attended by Housing Minister Binyamin

Ben-Eliezer, Agriculture Minister Ya'acov Tsur, deputy ministers Mordechai Gur and Micha Goldman, in addition to Sheves and the directors-general of the Agriculture and Interior ministries.

Goldberg, however, said the council heads' concerns was in solving outstanding problems "above and beyond" those relating to regular local authority budgets.

"There is a shortage of security rooms, bomb shelters and ambulances in the region, as well as other problems including the need to invest in infrastructure and development," said Goldberg.

"We have decided to wait for a while now, because of the security situation in the country and because we want to see what the government does, but in deeds not just words," Goldberg added.

Syrian newspaper: Israeli security demands are 'impossible'

DAVID RUDGE and news agencies

SYRIA yesterday rejected as impossible Israel's security demands on the Golan Heights, and reiterated that any arrangements should be equal on both sides of the fence border.

The official newspaper Tishreen did not specify the demands, but said they reflected Israel's rejection of the principle of equality and the balance of forces.

"Israel is putting impossible demands for security arrangements," Tishreen said. "It rejects the principle of equality and insists on disturbing the balance of forces. They interfere in the core of Syria's sovereignty. It is natural that Syria rejects such blackmail. Syria reminds Israeli rulers that the basis of peace could not be applied on one party and not the other," the daily said.

State-run Radio Damascus said yesterday that Syria is in no hurry to make peace with Israel if that peace is not "just and comprehensive."

"If the option is between a

fragile, partial deal and a just and comprehensive peace, Syria will choose the just and comprehensive peace no matter how long it will take," the radio said in a commentary.

It said Syria will not be intimidated by the "weapon of time" used by Israel to achieve a partial deal.

"Syria is not in a hurry," the radio said. "It will not be involved in anything that will not serve its interests, or respond to its principles in accordance with the resolutions of the international community."

On a separate matter, the Lebanese press carried reports yesterday of Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Shara denying as "baseless" earlier stories that the Syrian authorities had instructed Palestinian terrorist organizations to leave Damascus.

The papers quoted Shara as

saying that the Syrians did not consider the 10 Palestinian factions, which have their headquarters in Damascus, as terrorist organizations.

"We cannot enter into an agreement leading to a reconciliation with Israel, and a war with others," Shara was quoted as saying. Furthermore, he said that Syria could not accept anybody trying to "dictate how it should act on its own soil."

In London, Amnesty International released a report yesterday saying that thousands of political prisoners remain in prison on political grounds at the mercy of government security forces, who are guilty of gross human rights violations.

"Thousands of these political prisoners and have been denied the right to fair trial, scores have simply 'disappeared', others continue to be held years after they have fully served their prison sentences and dozens have died in custody," the report said.

IDF soldier injured, two Hizbullah men killed in zone

DAVID RUDGE

AN IDF soldier was lightly wounded during another round of long-range fighting with Hizbullah gunmen in the security zone yesterday, as Hizbullah maintained the pressure of daily attacks.

Hizbullah announced last night that two of its men had been killed in the fighting, which took place around Rehan and Soujoud.

The incident yesterday morning came less than 24 hours after members of Hizbullah's fighting arm, the Islamic Resistance, ambushed and killed five South Lebanese Army soldiers in a different part of south Lebanon.

The army spokesman said the IDF soldier was wounded when several mortar rounds were fired at an IDF outpost in the Rehan region in the zone's northeastern sector.

The spokesman said the soldier was lightly hurt and was treated at the scene. Hizbullah gunmen also opened fire with RPG's and light weapons at a nearby SLA post in Soujoud, without inflicting casualties or causing damage.

IDF and SLA gunners returned fire and blasted suspected Hizbullah targets north of the zone in response

to the long-range attacks. Later in the afternoon, more shooting was reported, this time at an SLA position in the western sector of the zone, and IDF and SLA gunners again returned fire.

The incident in which the five SLA soldiers were killed occurred on Sunday night in the Jezzine enclave region when Hizbullah gunmen hit an SLA truck transporting the men with a Sagger anti-tank missile and set it ablaze.

The five soldiers were all from the same village, Ein Majdalaine, and their deaths were seen as a further blow to SLA morale.

Hizbullah followed up the attack by increasing its psychological war on the SLA. A statement issued by the organization in Beirut yesterday said: "Israel cannot protect its own

troops so don't expect any protection for yourselves.

"They (Israel) are seducing you with money, but that's not much use when you have to give up your honor, dignity and even your lives. You are being used as sandbags and minesweepers, and your lives are nothing to them (Israel)," the statement said.

The losses suffered by Hizbullah in the past few weeks, including the recent slaying of one of its regional commanders, Roda Yassin, in an IAF helicopter gunship attack, does not seem to have affected the organization's fighting capabilities.

Lebanese security sources were quoted in Beirut papers as saying that the number of attacks in the zone is now averaging almost three a day - mostly by Hizbullah.

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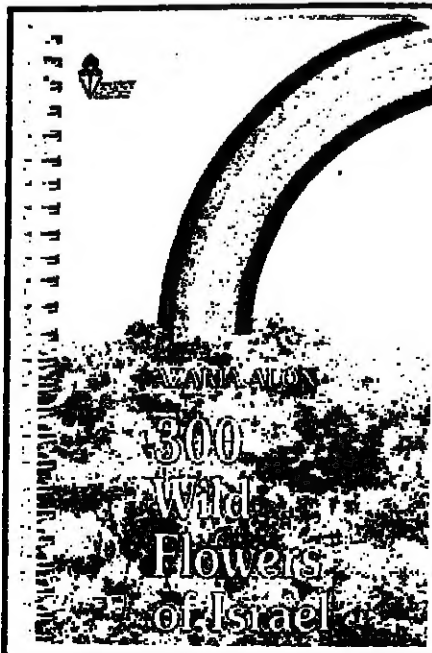
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